CRICHTON.

BY W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "ROOKWOOD."

Ergo, flos juvenum, Scotiæ spes, Palladis ingens,
Ereptumque decus Musarum e dulcibus ulnis,
Te, quamvis sileant alii, Crichtone, poetæ,
Teque, tuamque necem nunquam mea Musa silebit.

ABERNETHY. *Musa Campestris.*

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
MDCCCXXXVII.

LONDON:

THOMAS CURSON MANSARD, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

To,

the Right Honourable

the Countess of Blessington

these Volumes are

inscribed.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

The First Day.

The First Night.

Lyrics.

PREFACE.

THERE is a passage in David Buchanan's Memoir of Crichton, in which, alluding to the deadly enmity borne towards the Admirable Scot by Vincenzo di Gonzaga, he assigns as the cause—"*quod amasiam Principis deperiret.*" This passage may be regarded as the text of the narrative of Sir Thomas

Urquhart, and of the following romance. To a certain extent I have pursued the course taken by the never-sufficiently-to-be-admired Knight of Cromarty, whose ΕΚΣΚΥΒΑΛΥΡΟΝ is, indeed, a jewel of a book. His descriptions of the masque, and duel at Mantua are inimitable. So thoroughly was this singular writer imbued with the spirit of Rabelais (of whom he has left an unfinished, but so far as it goes most exquisite translation), that in his account of the disputation in the college of Navarre, he seems to have unconsciously imitated Panurge's controversy with Thaumast the Englishman; while in the "true pedigree and lineal descent of the ancient and honourable family of Urquhart," he has emu-

lated the mighty genealogical honours of the good Pantagruel. Sir Thomas, however, is a joyous spirit—a right Pantagruelist; and if occasionally—

Projicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,

he has an exuberance of wit and playfulness of fancy that amply redeems his tendency to fanfarronade.

In this attempt to illustrate the various shades of Crichton's many-coloured character I have, perhaps, touched too lightly on its scholastic features. But I felt, that adequately to exhibit one of those scenes of intellectual digladiation, in which he was so fre-

quently, and so triumphantly engaged, would require the possession of a depth of learning little inferior to that of the invincible disputant himself. I have, accordingly, elected as the safer, and, indeed, more suitable course to portray him as the preux chevalier and all-accomplished gallant, rather than the philosopher and dialectitian. Boccalini's satiric sketch, Sir Thomas Urquhart's narrative, and other allusions of more accredited biographers would justify me in giving Crichton an air of gallantry, were it possible to conceive, that he who surpassed all the aspiring spirits of the age in which he flourished, in the feats of arts and arms, (and whose aim was to excel in every thing) could be behind them in their

excesses, especially when those very excesses tended to advance his reputation. The manners of the time were corrupt in the extreme. And the fascinations of the *belles et honnêtes dames et demoiselles* of the Court of Catherine de Medicis were such as required more stoicism to withstand, than the handsome Scot cared to practise. A notion of the universal profligacy of the period may speedily be gathered from the *bons contes* of Brantôme, and the different memoirs included in the Journal of Henri Trois.

What I have advanced respecting Marguerite de Valois is fully borne out by the *Divorce Satirique*, and the details of Scipio Dupleix. The majestic and terrible figure of

Catherine de Medicis is too deeply impressed upon the page of history to make it necessary to advert to the sources, whence I have transferred its lineaments to my canvass.

It only now remains to speak of Vincenzo di Gonzaga, whose cause has been warmly, but unsuccessfully advocated by the late Dr. Black. Notwithstanding his patronage of men of letters (extended towards them, as much from ostentation as any other motive, by the various Italian rulers of the time), this prince was, we learn, from Muratori, exceedingly luxurious and profuse in his habits—"*gran giocatore, grande scialacquator dal danaro, sempre involto fra il lusso, e gli amori, sempre in lieti passatempi o di festi, o*

di balli, o di musiche, o di commedie." Sismondi, who has given an excellent summary of his character, says—"*il amait avec passion les femmes, le jeu, la danse, le théâtre.*" And the Jesuit Possevino, the annalist (and, therefore, the panegyrist) of his family, expressly alludes to his revengeful disposition—"*quidam vindictæ nimium, ideòque in abrupta tractum opinantur.*" For the rest I may affirm with Victor Hugo—"*que souvent les fables du peuple font la vérité du poëte.*"

CRICHTON.

THE FIRST DAY.

February IV.

1579.

En celuy an vint un jeune homme quin'avoit que vingt ans ou environ, qui sçavoit tous les septs arts liberaux ; par le tesmoignage de tous les Clercs de l'Université de Paris, et si sçavoit joüer de tous les instruments, chanter et deschanter mieux que nul autre. Item, en faict de guerre, nul plus expert, et joüoit de l'épée à deux mains si merveilleusement, que nul ne s'y comparast ; car, quand il voyoit son ennemy, il ne falloit point à saillir sur luy vingt, ou vingt quatre pieds, à un sault. Item, il est Maistre en Arts, Maistre en Medecine, Docteur en Loix, Docteur en Decret, Docteur en Theologie : et vrayment il a disputé à nous au College de Navarre, qui estions plus de cinquante des plus parfaicts Clercs de l'Université de Paris, et plus de trois milles autres Clercs, et a si hautement respondu à toutes les questions qu'on luy a faictes, que c'est une droicte merveille à croire qui ne l'auroit veu.—

Recherches de Pasquier.

Histoire d'un jeune homme de prodigieux esprit.

THE FIRST DAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOLARS.

Tu viens doncques de Paris? dist Pantagruel—Et à quoy passez vous les temps, vous aultres Messieurs Estudians au dict Paris? — RABELAIS. — *Pantagruel.* — *Liv. II. Chap. vi.*

TOWARDS the close of Wednesday, the 4th of February, 1579, a vast assemblage of Scholars was collected before the gothic gateway of the ancient College of Navarre. So numerous was this concourse, that it not merely blocked up the area in front of this renowned seminary, but extended far down the Rue de la Montagne Saint-Généviève, in which it is situated. Never had such a disorderly rout been brought together since the days of the riot in 1557, when the predecessors of these

turbulent students took up arms, marched in a body to the Pré-aux-Clercs, set fire to three houses in the vicinity, and slew a sergeant of the guard, who vainly endeavoured to restrain their fury. Their last election of a Rector, Messire Adrian D'Amboise, ("*pater eruditionum*," as he is described in his epitaph,) when the same body congregated within the cloisters of the Mathurins, and thence proceeded, in tumultuous array, to the Church of Saint-Louis, in the Isle of the same name,—had been nothing to it. Every scholastic hive sent forth its drones. Sorbonne, and Montaigu, Cluni, Harcourt, the Four Nations, and a host of minor establishments—in all, amounting to forty-two—each added its swarms; and a pretty buzzing they created! The Fair of Saint-Germain had only commenced the day before. But though its festivities were to continue till Palm Sunday; and though it was the constant resort of the Scholars, who committed, during their days of carnival, ten thousand excesses,—it was now absolutely deserted.

The Pomme-de-Pin, the Castel, the Magdaleine, and the Mule, those *tabernes meritoires*, celebrated in Pantagruel's conference with the Limosin student, which has conferred upon them an immortality like that of our own Mermaid, were wholly neglected; the dice-box was laid aside for the nonce; and the well-used cards were thrust into the doublets of these thirsty tipplers of the Schools.

But not alone did the crowd consist of the brawler, the gambler, the bully, and the debauchee, though these, it must be confessed, predominated. It was a grand medley of all sects and classes. The modest demeanour of the retiring, pale-browed student, was haply contrasted with the ferocious aspect and reckless bearing of his immediate neighbour, whose appearance was little better than that of a bravo. The grave theologian and embryo ecclesiastic were placed in juxta-position with the scoffing and licentious acolyte: while the lawyer *in posse*, and the law-breaker *in esse*, were numbered amongst a group,

whose pursuits were those of violence and fraud.

Various as were the characters that composed it, not less diversified were the costumes of this heterogeneous assemblage. Subject to no particular regulations as to dress, or rather openly infracting them, if any such were attempted to be enforced,—each scholar, to whatever college he belonged, attired himself in such-wise as best suited his taste, or his finances. Taking it altogether, the mob was neither remarkable for the fashion, nor the cleanliness of the apparel of its members.

From Rabélais we learn that the passion of play was so strongly implanted in the students of his day, that they would frequently stake the points of their doublets at tric-trac or trou-madam; and but little improvement had taken place in their morals or manners some half century afterwards. The buckle at their girdle—the mantle on their shoulders—the shirt to their back—often stood the hazard of the die; and hence it not unfrequently hap-

pened, that a rusty *pourpoint* and ragged *chausses* were all the covering which the luckless dicers could enumerate, owing, no doubt, "to the extreme rarity and penury of *pecune* in their *marsupies*."

Round, or square caps, hoods and cloaks of black, gray, or other sombre hues were, however, the prevalent garb of the members of the University. But here and there might be seen some gayer specimen of the tribe, whose broad-rimmed, high-crowned felt hat, and flaunting feather — whose puffed-out sleeves, and exaggerated ruff, (with starched plaits of such amplitude, that they had been not inappropriately named *plats de Saint Jean Baptiste*, from the resemblance which the wearer's head bore to that of the Saint, when deposited in the charger of the daughter of Herodias) were intended to ape the leading mode of the gay and voluptuous court of their sovereign, Henri Trois.

To such an extent had these insolents carried their licence of imitation, that certain of their members, fresh from the fair of

St. Germain, and not wholly unacquainted with the hippocras of the suttlers crowding its mart, wore around their throats enormous collars of paper, cut in rivalry of the legitimate plaits of muslin, and bore in their hands long hollow canes, from which they discharged peas and other missiles in imitation of the wand-like sarbacane then in vogue with the monarch and his minions.

Thus fantastically tricked out, on that same day—nay, only a few hours before, and at the fair we have mentioned, these facetious wights, with more merriment than discretion, had ventured to exhibit themselves before the train of Henri, and to exclaim loud enough to reach the ears of the monarch, "*à la fraize on connôit le veau!*"—a piece of pleasantry for which they subsequently paid dear.

Notwithstanding its shabby appearance in detail, the general effect of this scholastic rabble was striking and picturesque. The thick moustaches, and clipped and pointed beards with which the lips and chins of most of them were decorated, gave to their phy-

siognomies a manly and determined air, fully borne out by their unrestrained carriage and deportment. All almost to a man, were armed with a short, stout, vine-wood staff, called, from its mode of application, which was to hurl it at the head of an adversary, the *estoc volant*, tipped and shod with steel; a weapon fully understood by them, and rendered, by their dexterity in the use of it, formidable to their adversaries. Not a few carried at their girdles the long rapier, so celebrated in their duels and brawls, or concealed within their bosom a poignard or two-edged knife.

The Scholars of Paris have ever been a turbulent and ungovernable race; and at the period of which this narrative treats, and, indeed, long antecedently, were little better than a licensed horde of robbers, consisting of a pack of idle and wayward youth drafted from all parts of Europe, as well as from the remoter provinces of their own nation. There was little in common between the mass of students and their brethren excepting the fellowship resulting from the universal licence

in which all indulged. Hence their thousand combats amongst themselves—combats almost invariably attended with fatal consequences—and which the heads of the University found it impossible to check. Their own scanty resources, eked out by what little they could derive from beggary or robbery, formed their chief subsistence; for many of them were positive mendicants, and were so denominated; and, being possessed of a sanctuary within their own quarters, to which they could at convenience retire, they submitted to the constraint of no laws, except those enforced within the jurisdiction of the University, and hesitated at no means of enriching themselves at the expence of their neighbours. Hence, the frequent warfare waged between them and the monks of St. Germain des Prés, whose monastic domains adjoined their territories, and whose meadows were the constant *champ clos* of their skirmishes: according to Dulaure—*presque toujours un théatre de tumulte, de galanterie, de combats, de duels, de débauches, et de sédition.* Hence their sanguin-

ary conflicts with the good citizens of Paris, to whom they were wholly obnoxious, and who occasionally repaid their aggressions with interest. In 1407, two of their number, convicted of assassination and robbery, were condemned to the gibbet, and the sentence was carried into execution; but so great was the uproar occasioned in the University by this violation of its immunities, that the Provost of Paris, Guillaume de Tignonville, was compelled to take down their bodies from Montfaucon, and see them honorably and ceremoniously interred. This recognition of their rights only served to make matters worse, and for a series of years the nuisance continued unabated.

It is not our purpose to record all the excesses of the University, nor the means taken for their suppression. Vainly were the civil authorities arrayed against them—vainly were bulls thundered from the Vatican—no amendment was effected. The weed might be cut down, but was never entirely extirpated. Their feuds were transmitted from generation

to generation, and their old bone of contention with the Abbot of St. Germain (the Pré-aux-Clercs) was, after an uninterrupted strife for thirty years, submitted to the arbitration of the Pope, who very equitably refused to pronounce judgment in favour of either party.

Such were the Scholars of Paris in the sixteenth century;—such was the character of the clamorous crew who besieged the portals of the College of Navarre.

The object that summoned together this unruly multitude was, it appears, a desire on the part of the Scholars to be present at a public controversy, or learned disputation, then occurring within the great hall of the College, before which they were congregated; and the disappointment caused by their finding the gates closed, and all entrance denied to them, occasioned their present disposition to riot.

It was in vain they were assured by the halberdiers stationed at the gates, and who, with their crossed pikes, strove to resist the onward pressure of the mob, that the hall and

court were already crammed to overflowing—that there was not room even for the sole of a foot of a Doctor of the Faculties, and that their orders were positive and imperative that none beneath the degree of a Bachelor or Licentiate should be admitted, and that a troop of martinets and béjaunes could have no possible claim to admission.

In vain they were told this was no ordinary disputation, no common controversy, that all were alike entitled to licence of ingress, that the disputant was no undistinguished scholar, whose renown did not extend beyond his own trifling sphere, and whose opinions, therefore, few would care to hear, and still fewer to oppugn, but a foreigner of high rank, in high favour and fashion, and not more remarkable for his extraordinary intellectual endowments, than for his brilliant personal accomplishments.

In vain the trembling officials sought to clinch their arguments by stating, that not alone did the conclave consist of the chief members of the University, the senior Doctors

of Theology, Medicine, and Law, the Professors of the Humanities, Rhetoric, and Philosophy, and all the various other dignitaries; but that the debate was honoured by the presence of Monsieur Christophe de Thou, first President of Parliament; by one of the Secretaries of State and Governor of Paris, René de Villequier, Baron de Clairvaux; by the Ambassadors of Elizabeth of England, and of Philip II. of Spain, with several of their suite; by Pierre de Bourdeille, Abbé de Brantôme; by M. Miron, Physician to his most Catholic Majesty, Henri III.; by Cosmo Ruggieri, chief astrologer to the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medicis; by the two brightest stars of the *Pléiade Françoise*, Messires Pierre de Ronsard and Étienne Iodelle; by the well-known advocate of parliament, Messire Étienne Pasquier; but, also, (and here came the *gravamen* of the objection to their admission) by the two especial favourites of his majesty and leaders of affairs, the lords of Joyeuse and D'Épernon.

It was in vain the Students were informed

that, for the preservation of strict decorum, they had been commanded by the Rector to make fast the gates. No excuses would avail them. The Scholars were cogent reasoners, and a show of staves soon brought their opponents to a nonplus. In this line of argument they were perfectly aware of their ability to prove a *major*.

"To the wall with them—to the wall!" cried a hundred infuriated voices. "Down with the halberdiers—down with the gates—down with the disputants—down with the Rector himself!—deny our privileges! To the wall with Messire Adrian D'Amboise—exclude the disciples of the University from their own halls!—curry favour with the court minions!—hold a public controversy in private!—down with him—we will issue a *mandamus* for a new election on the spot!"

Whereupon a deep groan resounded throughout the crowd, and was succeeded by a volley of fresh execrations against the Rector, and an angry demonstration of the short-staves,

accompanied by a brisk shower of peas from the sarbacanes.

The officials turned pale, and calculated the chance of a broken neck in reversion, with that of a broken crown in immediate possession. The former being at least contingent, appeared the milder alternative, and they might have been inclined to adopt it, had not a further obstacle stood in their way. The gate was barred withinside, and the huissiers and bedels who had the custody of the door, though alarmed at the tumult without, positively refused to unfasten it.

Again, the threats of the Scholars were renewed, and further intimations of violence were exhibited,—again the peas rattled upon the hands and faces of the halberdiers, till their ears tingled with pain and rage.

"Prate to us of the King's favourites," cried one of the foremost of their ranks, a youth decorated with a paper collar, as before-mentioned: "they may rule within the

precincts of the Louvre, but not within the walls of the University. Maugrebleu! We hold them cheap enough. We heed not the idle bark of these full-fed court lap-dogs.—What to us is the bearer of a bilboquet? By the Four Evangelists we will have none of them here! Let the little cadet of Gascony, D'Épernon, reflect on the fate of Quélus and Maugiron, and let our gay Joyeuse beware of the dog's death of Saint Mégrin. Place for better men—place for the Schools—away with ruffs and sarbacanes!"

"What to us is a President of Parliament, or a governor of the city?" shouted another of the same gentry. "We care nothing for their ministration; we recognise them not, save in their own courts; all their authority fell to the ground at the gate of the Rue St. Jacques, when they entered our dominions. We care for no parties; we are *politiques*, and steer a middle course; we hold the Guisards as cheap as the Huguenots, and the messieurs of the League weigh as little with us as the disciples of Calvin. Our only Sovereign is

Gregory XIII., Pontiff of Rome; away with the Guise and the Béarnais!"

"Away with Henri of Navarre, if you please," cried a man of Harcourt; "or Henri of Valois, if you list; but by all the Saints not with Henri of Lorraine,—he is the fast friend of the true faith. No!—no!—live the Guise—live the Holy Union!"

"Away with Elizabeth of England," cried a scholar of Cluni; "what doth her representative here? Seeks he a spouse for her amongst our schools? She will have no great bargain, I own, if she bestows her royal hand upon our Duc D'Anjou."

"If you value your buff jerkin, sirrah, I counsel you to say nothing slighting of Elizabeth of England in my hearing," returned an Englishman of the Four Nations, bluff as the huge bull-dog at his heels, and raising his bludgeon after a menacing fashion.

"Away with Philip of Spain and his Ambassador!" cried a Bernardin.

"Por los ojos de mi Dama!" cried a Spaniard belonging to the College of Narbonne, with

huge moustaches curled half-way up his bronzed and insolent visage, and a broad-leaved sombrero pulled fiercely over his brow, "This may not pass muster. The representative of his Majesty Dom Felipe must be respected even by the Academics of Lutetia. Which of you shall gainsay me?—ha!"

"What business has he here with his suite, on occasions like to the present?" returned the Bernardin; "Tête-Dieu! this disputation is one which little concerns the interest of your politic King; and methinks Dom Philip or his representative has regard for little else than whatsoever may advance his own interest. Your Ambassador hath, I doubt not, some latent motive for his present attendance in our schools."

"Peradventure," returned the Spaniard; "we will discuss that point anon."

"What title hath the Seigneur Abbé de Brantôme to a seat amongst us?" said the scion of Harcourt; "certes, he hath a reputation for wit, scholarship and gallantry.

But what is that to us? His place might now be filled by worthier men."

"And what, in the devil's name, brings Cosmo Ruggieri hither?" asked the Bernardin. "What doth the wrinkled old dealer in the black art hope to learn from us? We are not given to alchemy, and the occult sciences; we practise no hidden mysteries; we brew no philtres; we compound no slow poisons; we vend no waxen images. What doth he here, I say? 'Tis a scandal in the Rector to permit his presence. And what if he came under the safeguard, and by the authority of his royal mistress, Catherine de Medicis, shall we regard her passport? Down with the heathen Abbé; his abominations have been endured too long; they smell rank in our nostrils. Down with the infidel—the Jew—the sorcerer! The stake were too good for him—down with Ruggieri I say."

"Ay, down with the accursed Astrologer!" echoed the whole crew. "He has done abundant mischief in his time; a day of

reckoning has arrived; hath he cast his own horoscope? Did he foresee his own fate? Ha! ha!"

"And then the Poets," cried another member of the Four Nations—"a plague on both; would they were elsewhere than where they are. In what does this disputation concern them? Pierre Ronsard (*Rose de Pindar*, according to his anagram) being an offshoot of this same College of Navarre hath indubitably a claim upon her consideration. But he is waxing old, and I marvel that his gout permitted him to hobble so far. Oh, the mercenary old scribbler! His late verses halt like himself, yet he lowereth not the price of his masques. Besides which he is grown moral, and unsays all his former good things. Mort-Dieu! your superannuated bards ever recant the indiscretions of their nonage. Clement Marot took to psalm-writing in his old age. Room for the sophisters of Narbonne I say—to the dogs with Poesy!"

"Morbleu!" exclaimed a Sorbonist,

"What are the sophisters of Narbonne to the decretists of the Sorbonne, who will discuss you a position of Cornelius à Lapide, or a sentence of Peter Lombard, as readily as you would a flask of hippocras, or a slice of botargo. Ay, and cry *transeat* to a thesis of Aristotle, though it be against rule. What sayst thou, Capète?" continued he, addressing his neighbour, a scholar of Montaigu, whose modest gray capuchin procured him this appellation; "Are we the men to be thus scurvily entreated?"

"I see not that your merits are greater than ours," returned he of the capuch, "though our boasting be less. The followers of the lowly John Standoncht are as well able to maintain their tenets in controversy as those of Robert of Sorbon; and I see no reason why entrance should be denied us. The honour of the University is at stake, and all its strength should be mustered to assert it."

"Rightly spoken," returned the Bernardin; "and it were a lasting disgrace to our

Schools were this arrogant Scot to carry off their laurels, when so many who might have been found to lower his crest are allowed no share in their defence. The contest is one which concerns us all alike; we at least can arbitrate in case of need."

"I care not for the honours of the University," rejoined one of the Écossais, or Scotch College, then existing in the Rue des Amandiers, "but I care much for the glory of my countryman, and I would gladly have witnessed the triumph of the disciple of Rutherford, and of the classic Buchanan. But if the arbitrament to which you would resort is to be that of *voices* merely, I am glad the Rector in his wisdom has thought fit to keep you without, even though I myself be personally inconvenienced by it."

"Hijo di Dios! what fine talking is this?" retorted the Spaniard. "There is little chance of the triumph you predicate for your countryman. Trust me, we shall have to greet his departure from the debate with many

hisses and few cheers; and could we penetrate through the plates of yon iron door and gaze into the court it conceals from our view, we should find that the loftiness of his pretensions has been already humbled, and his arguments gravelled. Por la Litania de los Santos! to think of comparing an obscure student of the pitiful College of St. Andrew, with the most erudite Doctors of the most erudite University in the world, always excepting those of Valencia and Salamanca. It needs all thy country's assurance to keep the blush of shame from mantling thy cheeks."

"The seminary you revile," replied the Scot haughtily, "has been the nursery of our Scottish Kings; nay, the youthful James Stuart pursued his studies under the same roof, beneath the same wise instruction, and at the self-same time as our noble and gifted Crichton, whom you have falsely denominated an adventurer, but whose learning is not less distinguished than his lineage. His renown has preceded him hither, and he was not

unknown to your doctors when he affixed his programmes to these College walls. Hark!" continued the speaker exultingly, "and listen to yon evidence of his intellectual triumph."

And as he addressed his companions, a loud and continued clapping of hands proceeding from within was distinctly heard above the roar of the Students.

"That may be at his defeat," muttered the Spaniard between his teeth.

"No such thing," replied the Scot. "I heard the name of Crichton mingled with the plaudits."

"Cuerpo di Dios! and who may be this Phœnix—this Gargantua of intellect—who is to vanquish us all as Panurge did Thaumast the Englishman?" asked the Spaniard of the Scot.—"Who is he that is more philosophic than Pythagoras?—ha!"

"Who is more studious than Carneades?"

"More versatile than Alcibiades?"

"More subtle than Averroes?"

"More mystical than Plotinus?"

"More visionary than Artemidorus?"

"More infallible than the Pope?"

"And who pretends to dispute *de omni scibili?*" shouted several in a breath.

"*Et quolibet ente?*" added others with a laugh.

"Mine ears are stunned with your vociferations," replied the Scot. "You ask me who this Crichton is, and yourselves give the response. You have said he is a *rara avis;* a prodigy of wit and learning; and you have avouched no fable. He is so. But I will tell you that of him of which you are wholly ignorant, or which you have designedly overlooked. His condition is that of a Scottish gentleman of exalted rank. His mother was a Stuart directly descended from that regal line. His father, Sir Robert Crichton, who owneth the fair domains of Eliock and Cluny, was Lord Advocate to our bonny and luckless Mary, and still holds his high office. Methinks the Lords of Crichton might have been heard of here. Howbeit, they are well known to me, who, being an Ogilvy of Balfour, have often

heard tell of a certain contract or obligation, whereby——"

"Basta!" interrupted the Spaniard, "heed not thine own affairs, camarada; tell us of this Crichton—ha!"

"I have told you already more than I care to tell," replied Ogilvy, sullenly; "and if you lack further information respecting his favour at the Louvre, his feats of arms, and the esteem in which he is held by all the dames of honour in attendance upon your Queen Mother, Catherine de Medicis—and moreover," added he, with somewhat of sarcasm, "with her fair daughter Marguerite de Valois—you will do well to address yourself to the King's buffoon, Maître Chicot, whom I see not far distant from us. Few there are methinks who could in such short space have won so much favour, or acquired such bright renown."

"Humph!" muttered the Englishman, "your Scotsmen stick by each other all the world over. This Crichton may, or may not be the hero he is vaunted. But I shall

take leave to mistrust his praises from that quarter, till I find their truth confirmed."

"He has, to be sure, acquired the character of a stout swordsman," said the Bernardin, "to give the devil his due."

"He has not met with his match at the salle-d'armes, though he has crossed blades with the first escrimeurs in France," replied Ogilvy.

"I have seen him at the manège," said the Sorbonist, "go through his course of equitation, and being a not altogether unskilful horseman myself, I can report favourably of his performance."

"There is none among your youth can sit a steed like him," returned Ogilvy, "nor can any of the jousters carry off the ring with more certainty at the lists. I would fain hold my tongue, but you inforce me to speak in his praise."

"Cuerpo di Dios!" exclaimed the Spaniard, half unsheathing the lengthy rapier that hung by his side. "I will hold you a wager of ten rose-nobles to as many silver

reals of Spain, that with this stanch Toledo I will overcome your vaunted Crichton in close fight in any manner or practice of fence or digladiation which he may appoint —sword and dagger, or sword only, and stripped to the girdle, or armed to the teeth. Por la santa Trinidad! I will have satisfaction for the contumelious affront he hath put upon the very learned gymnasium to which I appertain; and it would gladden me to clip the wings of this loud-crowing cock, or of any of his dunghill crew," added he with a scornful gesture at the Scotsman.

"If that be all you seek, you shall not need to go far in your quest," returned Ogilvy. "Tarry till this controversy be ended, and if I match not your Spanish blade with a tough Scottish broadsword, and approve you as recreant at heart, as you are boastful and injurious of speech, may foul scorn ever after attach to my name."

"Courage, Sir Scot," said the English-

man, "thou wilt do well to slit the ears of this Spanish swash-buckler. I warrant me he hides a craven spirit beneath that slashed pourpoint. Thou art in the right, man, to make him eat his words. Be this Crichton what he may, he is at least thy countryman and in part mine own."

"And as such I will uphold him," said Ogilvy, "against any odds."

"Bravo! my valorous Dom Diego Caravaja," said the Sorbonist, slapping the Spaniard on the shoulder, and speaking in his ear. "Shall these scurvy Scots carry all before them?—I warrant me, no. We will make common cause against the whole beggarly nation; and in the meanwhile we entrust thee with this particular quarrel. See thou acquit thyself as beseemeth one of the descendants of the Cid."

"Account him already abased," returned Caravaja. "By Pelayo! I would the other were at his back, that both might be transfixed at a blow—ha!"

"To return to the subject of difference be-

tween ye," said the Sorbonist, who was too much delighted with the prospect of a duel to allow the quarrel a chance of subsiding, while it was in his power to keep the flame alive—"to return to the difference," said he aloud, glancing at Ogilvy, "it must be conceded that, as a wassailer, this Crichton is without a peer. None of us may presume to cope with him in the matter of the flask and the flagon, though we number amongst us some jolly topers. Friar John with the Priestess of Bacbuc was a washy bibber compared with him."

"He worships at the shrines of other Priestesses besides her's of Bacbuc, if I be not wrongly informed;" added he of Montaigu, who understood the drift of his companion.

"Else wherefore our rejoinder to his *cartels?*" returned the Sorbonist. "Do you not call to mind that beneath his arrogant defiance of our learned body, affixed to the walls of the Sorbonne, it was written—'That

he who would behold this miracle of learning must hie to the tavern or the bordel.'—Was it not so, my Hidalgo?"

"I have myself seen him at the temulentive tavern of the Falcon," returned Caravaja, "and at the lupinarian haunts in the Champ-Gaillard and the Val-d'Amour.—You understand me—ha!"

"Ha!—ha!—ha!" chorussed the Scholars. "Thy Crichton is no stoic—he is a disciple of Epicurus, Maître Ecossais—*vel in puellam impingit, vel in poculum*—ha! ha!"

"'Tis said that he hath dealings with the Evil One," observed the man of Harcourt, with a mysterious air; "and that, like Jeanne D'Arc, he hath surrendered his soul for his temporal welfare. Hence his wondrous lore—hence his supernatural beauty and accomplishments—hence his power of fascinating the fair sex—hence his constant run of luck with the dice—hence also is he invulnerable to the sword."

"He lies in his throat who says so," cried

the choleric Ogilvy. "To one and all of ye I breathe defiance—and there is not a brother in the College to which I belong who will not maintain my quarrel."

A loud laugh of derision followed this sally of the Scotsman; and, ashamed of having justly exposed himself to their ridicule by his idle and unworthy display of passion, he held his peace and endeavoured to turn a deaf ear to their taunts.

CHAPTER II.

THE GELOSO.

En ce mois les Comédiens Italiens, surnommez Li Gelosi, commencerent leurs comédies en l'Hostel de Bourbon, et il y avoit tel concours, que les quatre meilleurs prédicateurs de Paris n'en avoient pas tous ensemble autant, quand ils preschoient.

Journal de Henri III. 1557.

WHILE his eye glanced fiercely round upon his tormenters, Ogilvy suddenly encountered the dark and earnest orbs of a youth, standing at a little distance from him, but fully within hearing of their contention, who appeared to take a lively interest in the cause of quarrel, though his sympathy was evidently strongly enlisted in behalf of the Scotsman. There was something in the appearance of this

youth that, despite the excitement of his feelings, at once arrested the attention of Ogilvy. For some moments he could not remove his gaze from the boy's countenance; and when he did so, it was to muse upon its extraordinary beauty.

It was, indeed, a face to rivet the regard of a mere observer; and the delicacy and refinement of the youth's features presented a striking contrast to the ruffianly character of the visages by which he was surrounded. The contour was perfect. The chin was delicately wrought, while the lips, altogether unconscious of the downy honours of adolescence, corresponded in the same expression of rejoicing loveliness, and exuberant animal spirits. The full lips, however, were now compressed, and the thin proud nostrils distended with anger.

In age the boy could scarce have numbered more than sixteen summers, perhaps not so much, as his slight though exquisitely symmetrical figure, fragile even to effeminacy, indicated an early state of youth. But the

fire and intelligence of his glances showed that his spirit and resolution were far in advance of his years. Tresses of jetty hair overshadowed his flushed cheek—the olive tint of which, together with his intensely black eyes, proclaimed him a native of a southern clime—while his attire, though not otherwise singular, was neither that of a member of the University, nor accordant with any of the received usages then adopted by the good citizens of Paris. A cap of green Genoa velvet fell on one side of his head; a mantle of the same material, and of ampler fold than was the mode, was clasped with a chain of gold, and disposed so as best to hide his slender shape, and to give a semblance of more manly width to his narrow proportion of shoulder.

"You are moved in my behalf, young sir," said Ogilvy—remarking that the youth still kept his eye fixed upon him, forcing his way at the same time towards the spot where he stood. "May I ask to which of our academies you belong?"

"I belong to none of your schools," replied the youth—now shrinking from the Scot's approach as much as he had courted his attention from afar. "I came hither as a stranger, attracted solely by curiosity to learn the result of a disputation with which all Paris rings; and having unwittingly entered this crowd, though I would fain retire, I must now perforce abide its issue—which," added he, with some hesitation, and a slight increase of colour, "will I trust terminate in the triumph of your peerless countryman, in whose success I am, I own, nearly as much interested as yourself."

There was a music in the tones that vibrated in a strange manner upon the heart of Ogilvy.

"As I have a soul to be saved," thought he "but that they are boy's lips that uttered that speech, I could have sworn it was the very voice of my gentle Marion addressing me as she was wont do to on summer nights, long—long since flown, and in spots far—far away; and but that the eyes are darker, and a thought or so larger, I could swear they had

the same look, too. I would gladly know, if he be not from my own country, what can make him express himself so warmly in behalf of Crichton? Hark ye, young sir," cried he aloud, "you are not, I suppose, from Scotland, are ye?"

The youth could scarce forbear a smile at the inquiry; but he shook his head in denial. The smile that severed the lips displayed a set of teeth, brilliant as pearls.

"The very mouth is Marion's," thought Ogilvy.

"From Scotland?" shouted the Sorbonist. "Can any good come from out that rascal country? I know this youth well—he is of Mantua—one of the Gelosi—one of the Italian troop who have the King's licence to enact their plays at the Hôtel de Bourbon. I thought I knew the face and figure. But the voice was not to be mistaken.—'Tis he who singeth the airs in the comedies; and right well, too, I warrant me. The women are all transported with him. Ah!—a thought strikes me,—we have a minute or two to

spare,—why not employ it in a song? What say you, comrades, shall we lose this golden opportunity?—A song!—a song!"

"Bravo! — bravo!" cried the Scholars, clapping their hands. "Nothing could be better!—a song by all means;" and a circle of faces was presently formed round the Mantuan.

Meanwhile Ogilvy, not less annoyed at the turn which affairs had taken, than at the supposed imputations thrown out against the stranger, for, not being untinctured by the prejudices of his country, as to the morality of stage representations, he entertained a feeling of contempt, amounting almost to abhorrence, for the vocation of an actor, thus addressed him:—"Hath he not belied thee?" said he, with something of distrust. —"Say he hath spoken falsely—say thou art no player—no hired mimic, and, by the pious memory of John Knox, I will hurl back the foul aspersion in his teeth."

"Peace!" cried the scholar of Montaigu:

"Down with the froward Scot, if he offer further interruption."

"Let him answer me, and I am dumb," returned the resolute Ogilvy. "Once more, stranger—,have I misconstrued thee?"

"You have done so if you supposed me other than I am," replied the youth, raising his head. "I am of Mantua—I am one of the Gelosi!"

"You hear him," cried the Sorbonist. "He admits it; now, give us the song without more ado."

"I deny not my calling," replied the Mantuan, "but I will not sing at your bidding."

"We will see that," returned the Sorbonist. "There are pumps within our courts whose waters are as song-compelling as those of Helicon.—Their virtue is marvellous."

"Sangre di Dios! let us drag the young spark thither," cried Caravaja; "he will find his voice, I'll engage, rather than brook the catarrhs likely to be engendered by the gelid fount."

Saying which, he laid his hand rudely upon the Mantuan's shoulder. The latter started back,—his dark eyes shot lightnings at the aggressor, while, quick as thought, he drew forth a stiletto from his bosom, and placed it at Caravaja's throat.

"Withdraw thy hand from my person," cried he, "or by St. Mark I will strike!"

And Caravaja seeing, from his manner, that the Geloso was in earnest, deemed it prudent to relinquish his hold, which he did with a shrug and his habitual braggadocio exclamation.

"Bravissimo!" shouted the by-standers with renewed acclamations; "a capital stage stroke;—it would tell famously at the Hôtel de Bourbon."

"By my faith!" said the Englishman, laughing heartily, "our Spaniard hath the worst of it."

"I pray you, Signori," said the Geloso, heedless of their sarcasm, taking off his cap and displaying at the same time a shower of blackest ringlets,—"I beseech you to let me

depart without further molestation. I have it not in my power to comply with your wishes, neither do I see your title to require my compliance.—Though a player, I am not wholly unfriended; and if——"

"He threatens us," said the Sorbonist:—"marked you that *if?* It will never do to give up our point. The song, Signor Geloso, and then depart as soon as you list."

"Never!" replied the Mantuan; "and I counsel ye to beware how you drive me to extremities."

"If none other will take the youth's part I will," said the Englishman—"I care not if he be Geloso—or Diaboloso. If all are against him—I am for him. The Blounts ever side with the weaker party, and Simon Blount will not disgrace the name he bears. Come, Sir Scot, this quarrel is partly thine. Draw thy blade, man, and stand by this poor lad, who looks as if he had never seen a blow struck before."

A blithe jingle of small silver bells was heard amongst the crowd, offering a season-

able interruption to the brawl, and a very fantastic little personage, from whom the sound proceeded, strove to press forward. He was clad in a singular parti-coloured raiment, composed of white, crimson, and blue damask, so quaintly fashioned, and striped with such numberless straight and horizontal lines that it produced the most whimsical effect imaginable. His slashed just-au-corps, puffed out at the hips in the most extravagant style, served as an admirable foil to his thin mis-shapen legs, decked in hose of amaranthine hue. Over his shoulders was thrown a surcoat which resembled nothing so nearly as the peculiar raiment with which the knave of clubs is attired, and which depended in huge sleeves over his arms.

At the back of this surcoat the royal arms were emblazoned in gold tissue, and again displayed on either sleeve. Innumerable tags, to which, as well as to the edges of his sleeves, hung the bells in question, adorned each knee. Around his neck he wore a chain of small medallions, stamped with devices

à la folie, the gift of his *cher Henriot*, as he fraternally termed his royal master, and his tall conical cap—which had superseded the old orthodox cock's-comb, then quite out of date—had the triple points *à la cornette*, borne by all the servitors of the court. In his hand he carried his ensign of office—the bauble, an ebony truncheon decorated with the fool's head, cast in wrought silver. A huge *escarcelle*, or pouch, filled with confectionary, of which he was immoderately fond, hung at his girdle, and near it was stuck a formidable dagger of lath.

This bizarre figure was the King's favourite buffoon, Chicot.

"By your leave, my Masters," cried he, shouldering his way through the crowd, and bestowing buffets with his bauble upon all who opposed his progress. "Why would you stop me? Folly was ever current in the University of Paris. Besides, all my wisdom is needed. They are about to souse a man in cold water to give him a voice. That were a feat worthy the first Fool in France. I should

lose my post were I not to assist. Have a care, I say. Make way for the Abbé of the Béjaunes, though he be not mounted on his ass, as at the Feast of the Innocents."

And planting himself immediately before the Geloso, to whom he nodded in the most familiar manner, Chicot drew his lathen dagger, and with abundance of gesticulations and grimaces, brandished it in the face of the Students.

"This youth, who is my foster-brother," said the Jester (here there was a loud laugh), "is in the right to refuse you. He is engaged for the masque to-night, and must not exhibit himself before hand. Our gossip Henri is chary of his services. If you want music come with us to the gates of the Louvre. The band of the Swiss Guard is celebrated for its quick movement."

"Exasperate them not, kind Signor," whispered the Geloso, "I will rather comply with their demands, unreasonable though they be, than endanger another's safety by refusal. Signori," continued he, addressing his perse-

cutors, "I will do your bidding — provided I am free to depart when my song is ended."

"Agreed!" Shouted the scholars, waving their caps. In an instant the clamour ceased. A dense ring was formed around the Mantuan; while in a voice of the most exquisite modulation, though with something of sarcasm in its tone, he sang the following words — evidently the inspiration of the moment.

The Scottish Cavalier.

I.

From Scotia's clime to laughing France
The peerless Crichton came;
Like him no knight could shiver lance,
Wield sword, or worship dame.
Alas! each maiden sighs in vain,
He turns a careless ear:
For *Queenly* fetters fast enchain
The Scottish Cavalier.

II.

But not o'er camp and court, alone,
Resistless Crichton rules;
Logicians next, defeated, own
His empire o'er the Schools.

'Gainst sophists shrewd shall wit prevail,
Though tome on tome they rear;
And pedants pale, as victor, hail
The Scottish Cavalier!

"No more of this," cried the Sorbonist, "this is not the song we bargained for. We will have thy favorite air from *La Maddalena*, and the canzonet from *La Florinda* — or thou stirrest not, mon mignon."

"Bah!" ejaculated Chicot — "you are no judges. The song was charming — and I vote for its repetition. But the buffoonery of the troop at the hotel of the Abbé de Clugni, in the Rue des Mathurins, would be more in your way. What say you to a motet from their last *sotie*—*La Farce joyeuse des béjaunes sophistes?*"

"Ventrebleu! What mockery is this?" cried one of the Scholars with the preposterous paper collars. "Are we to be chaffered out of our projects by yon magot-pie, who, having newly-escaped his cage, hath flown hither to babble at his ease?"

"'Tis well," returned Chicot, "that, like some I wot of, I have not arrayed myself in peacock's plumes. Strut as it may, the daw will out; and roar as loud and lion-like as he may, the ass is an ass still. Fool as I am, I am not folly's counterfeit. The ape, but not the ape's shadow, compère. 'By the caul you may know the calf;' that is your cry, they tell me. Now, were your calf-ship to be judged by that rule, we could scarce find subject fitter for the shambles."

"A thousand devils!" cried the enraged Scholar. "Were you ten times the licensed fool you are, you shall repent this insolence."

"Back!" exclaimed Blount, interposing his bludgeon so as to ward off the blow aimed at the jester's sconce. "A bloody cock's-comb were an unseemly consummation to such gay apparel—reserve thy blows for one more able to requite them—seest thou not his weapon is of lath."

"Let him keep better rule over his tongue then," replied the angry scholar.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Chicot, screaming

with laughter, "stay him not. I will combat with him to the outrance. My marotte to his ruff, but I slay him on the exchange of a stoccato—my *feeble* shall prove his *reverse*."

"In the mean time we are losing sight of our songster," said the Sorbonist. "What hath become of the Geloso?"

"Vanished, as I think," exclaimed Caravaja. "I no where behold him."

"I had not remarked his departure," mentally ejaculated Ogilvy, "but 'tis better thus. I could not have refused the poor youth aid in case of need, and yet my soul revolts at the thought of being embroiled in the quarrel of a stage-player, and an Italian, moreover. 'Tis strange the face should haunt me so much. I will think of him no more."

But in spite of his resolution, Ogilvy could not prevent his eyes from wandering amongst the distant ranks of the Scholars in search of the fugitive. His quest was vain; during the confusion, it would seem, created by the Jester's defiance of the student, and not improbably by his connivance, or that of

the Englishman, the Mantuan had contrived, unobserved, to make good his retreat.

"Hath Mâitre Chicot secreted him in his escarcelle? It is large enough," said the Sorbonist—

"Or in the sleeves of his surcoat?" said the Bernardin.

"Or swallowed him as Gargantua did the pilgrim," added Caravaja, laughing.

"Or as thou wouldst a cup of Xeres, were it proffered thee, or thine own words if need be, Señor Caballero," said the Jester.

"Señor Satan," roared Caravaja, unsheathing his sword, "I will carve thee into as many slices as there are patches in thy jerkin —sa—ha!"

"Or, as there are dints on thy sword, of thine own notching," rejoined Chicot, with a malignant grin—"or oaths in thy mouth, of thine own coining—or lies in thy brain, of thine own hatching—or dice in thy pocket, of thine own loading—or pence in thy pouch, of thine own pilfering—or scars in thy back, of thine own procuring—ha! ha! Shred me into

as many pieces as thy own Spanish onion, and the number shall yet be far below thy own countless peccadilloes—sa—ha!"

"Sangre di Dios! Give me way to the scurrilous ribald," vociferated Caravaja, furious as a bull chafed by the matador, flourishing his rapier and stamping on the ground, and with difficulty withheld by the Students. But nothing could check the wild exhilaration of the Jester, who was nigh convulsed with laughter at the ineffectual attempts of the vindictive Spaniard to reach him. He exhibited no alarm, but stood his ground as carelessly as if no danger threatened him. Nay, he even continued his galling mockery, and would, in all probability, have paid the penalty of his rashness, had not a new incident occurred which operated as a diversion in his favour, inasmuch as it attracted universal attention.

The gates of the College of Navarre were suddenly thrown open, and a long-continued thunder of applause, bursting from within announced the conclusion of the debate. That

it had terminated in favour of Crichton could no longer be doubted, as his name formed the burthen of all the plaudits with which the courts were ringing.

All was excitement, and a general movement took place. Ogilvy could no longer restrain himself—pushing forward by prodigious efforts, he secured to himself a position at the portal.

The first person who presented himself to his inquiring eyes, was a gallant figure in a glittering steel corslet, crossed by a silken sash, who bore at his side a long rapier with a magnificent handle, and upon his shoulder a lance of some six feet in length, headed with a long scarlet tassel, and brass half-moon pendant.

"Is not Crichton victorious?" asked Ogilvy of the captain of the guard, for such he was.

"He hath acquitted himself to admiration," replied the guardsman, who contrary to the custom of such gentry, (for captains of the guard have been fine gentlemen in all ages), did not appear to be displeased at this appeal

to his courtesy, "and the Rector hath adjudged him all the honours that can be bestowed by the University."

"Hurrah for old Scotland!" shouted Ogilvy, throwing his bonnet in the air, "I was sure it would be so. This is a day worth living for. *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*"

"Thou at least shall have reason to remember it," muttered Caravaja, who being opposite to him, heard the exclamation—"and he too, perchance," added he, knitting his brows, and drawing his cloak over his shoulder.

"If the Seigneur Crichton be compatriot of yours, you are in the right to be proud of him," replied the Captain Larchant, "for the memory of his deeds of this day will live as long as learning shall be held in reverence. Never before had such a marvellous display of universal erudition been heard within these schools. By my faith, I am absolutely wonderstruck, and not I alone, but all—in proof of which I need only tell you, that coupling

his matchless scholarship with his extraordinary accomplishments, the Professors in their address to him at the close of the controversy, have bestowed upon him the epithet of 'ADMIRABLE'—an appellation by which he deserves ever after to be distinguished."

"The Admirable Crichton!" echoed Ogilvy—"hear you that!—a title adjudged to him by the whole conclave of the University—hurrah! THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON! 'Tis a name will find an echo in the heart of every true Scot."

"Live the Admirable Crichton!" shouted the Scholars.

"In the mean time," said Larchant, smiling at Ogilvy's exultations, and describing a circle with the point of his lance, "I must trouble you to stand back, Messieurs Scholars, and leave free passage for the Rector and his train. Archers, advance, and make clear the way, and let the companies of the Baron D'Épernon and of the Vicomte de Joyeuse be

summoned, as well as the guard of the Marquis de Villequier. Patience, Messieurs, you will hear all particulars anon."

Saying which he retired, and the men-at-arms, less complaisant than their leaders, soon succeeded in forcing back the crowd.

CHAPTER III.

THE RING.

De faict par touts les carrefours de la ville Pantagruel mist conclusions en nombre de neuf mille sept cents soixante et quatre en tout sçavoir, touchant en icelles les plus forts doubtes qui feussent en toutes les sciences. Et premièrement en la rue de Feuvre tint contre touts les Regens, Artiens et Orateurs, et les mists touts de cul. Et à ce assistarent la plus part des Seigneurs de la Cour, Maistres de Requestes, Presidens, Conseilliers, les gents des comptes, secretaires, et advocats et aultres: ensemble les echevins de la dicte ville, avecque les medecins et les canonistes.

RABELAIS. *Pantagruel, Liv. II. Chap. X.*

As the Archers advanced, and posted one of their number at every interval of ten paces, the Scholars drew back, and, with almost military precision, formed themselves into two lines.

A profound hush of expectation reigned

throughout their ranks; each eye was directed towards the imbrowned archway of the Academy, but not a word was uttered. All remained in postures as motionless as those of the statues of Philippe-le-Bel and Jeanne de Navarre his spouse, (the foundress of the institution), who looked from their niches on the portal, like mute spectators of the scene.

Meanwhile, from out the gateway there issued such a constant stream of grave and gowned dignitaries, that the space between the two files of Students was presently filled up by a moving mass of robes and caps. First, flourishing his rod of office, a blue wand plentifully besprinkled with fleurs-de-lis of gold, alternately planting it on the ground, or elevating it in the air, with a strut and simper worthy of Malvolio, strode forth the Clerk of the Messengers, who bore upon his tunic the blazon of the University, namely, a hand descending from the sky, holding a book, surrounded by three fleurs-de-lis, *or*, on a field, *azure*.

Glancing at the Scholars with a supercilious smile, the herald passed on.

Next came the bedels and minor-bedel of all the Faculties, who by some accident were so jumbled together, that it was impossible to determine or arrange any order of precedence. All put their best feet foremost. Medicine trod hard on the heels of Theology and the Arts, while Civil Law appeared most uncivilly inclined to outstrip all three. These bedels or *greffiers* were jolly robustious souls, bending beneath the weight of their ponderous silver maces, and attired in gowns of black, blue, violet, or dark red, each colour denoting the Faculty to which the wearer pertained. To the bedels succeeded a confusion worse confounded, in the Heads of the Faculties themselves, who strove in vain to collect together their scattered forces, or to form them into any thing like processional array.

Violations of collegiate etiquette took place each instant. Here was a Doctor of Theology in his black cope edged with ermine, by the

side of a *procureur* of the Nations, in his red robe of office; a propinquity which the Theologian internally execrated, and openly resented. There a Doctor of Medicine in his scarlet cope, trimmed with minever, was elbowed by a licentiate of Theology, who happened to be suppler of joint, and who was arrayed in cope of sable bordered with white fur. No degrees were respected. The Doctors of the Canon and Civil Law, who had kept together during the debate, and whose costume consisted of scarlet robes with hoods of fur, were most scandalously hustled in maintaining their ground against a rush of youthful Bachelors of Medicine. Notwithstanding all this confusion of raiments, which were so massed and heaped together as to present an almost rainbow variety of tints in the rays of the setting sun — notwithstanding the utter want of order which occasioned much objurgation on the part of the seniors, and not a little expenditure of patience as well as of ermine, by their too close proximity to each

other—notwithstanding all this, the whole body of Doctors, Professors, Bachelors, and Licentiates, were unanimous upon one point —viz. that the disputation at which they had assisted had been more admirably contested than any controversy since the days of Peter Abelard and Berengarius, and that in vanquishing them, Crichton had vanquished the whole world of science and learning.

Suddenly the shrill blast of a trumpet shook the air, and echoed far down the hill of St. Généviève. The call was immediately answered by the trampling of a troop of horsemen in the distance. Presently the clatter of hoofs drew nearer, and a few seconds had not elapsed ere two companies, each consisting of fifty archers of the body-guard, fully accoutred and superbly mounted, rode into the area and drew up in the rear of the Students. Besides this array of soldiery might be seen the numerous retinue of the Marquis de Villequier, composed not merely of his own lacqueys and attendants

in their sumptuous apparel of blue and red cloth, but of certain armed cross-bowmen of the *Guet Royal*, headed by their Chevalier, who surrounded the Governor's huge unwieldy caroche of state and richly comparisoned Flanders horses. Altogether it was a gallant sight; and the Scholars, though not entirely satisfied with the presence of so many intruders, and perhaps not wholly unawed by their numbers, manifested no further show of discontent.

A pause now took place in the procession. The foremost in advance came to a halt, and the whole body wheeled round and faced the college. Three semicircles were thus formed, of which the professors described the inner and the lesser, the archers on horseback the outer and wider, and the students the intermediate and denser one. Still, however, a small vacant space was preserved before the portal.

At this instant a murmur arose amongst the schoolmen. "He comes—he comes"—

flew from one to the other with the rapidity of lightning.

Four other mace-bearers, walking abreast, strode deliberately through the gateway, as if they had been the only objects of interest, and drew up two on either side.

The course was now completely unobstructed. The Rector appeared—he was a man of venerable aspect and majestic mien, and well became the magnificent apparel—the ample stole of scarlet, and mantle of snowy ermine, in which, as chief of the University, he was clad. A sash of sky-blue silk crossed his robe, and sustained a sumptuous velvet escarcelle, fringed with lace and decorated with buttons of gold. Upon his head he wore the square cap of a Doctor of Theology.

At his side, and on his right hand, walked one on whom all eyes were bent with wonder and curiosity. The Rector and his companion stopped without the gateway, when, as if they were influenced by some sudden and uncon-

trolable impulse, one long, loud, continuous acclamation burst from the ranks of the scholars. Nor were the graver members of the University silent. Even the Doctors of Theology lent the aid of their voices—while the archers, raising themselves in their stirrups, lifted their helmets from their brows, and waving them in the air, increased and prolonged the clamour by their vociferations.

Crichton, for the reader will, no doubt, have surmised that he was the "load-star of all eyes," possessed an exterior so striking, and a manner so eminently prepossessing, that his mere appearance seemed to act like a spell on the beholders. The strongest sympathy was instantly and universally excited in his favour. Youth is ever interesting. But youth so richly graced as Crichton's could not fail to produce an extraordinary impression. At the sight of him the whole aspect of things was changed Enthusiasm, amounting almost to devotion, usurped the place of animosity, and all vindictive feelings resulting from

wounded pride or other petty annoyances, were obliterated or forgotten. Even discomfiture wore the aspect of victory.

But in the demeanour of the victor no external sign of self-elation was perceptible. He might not be insensible to the distinction of his achievement, but he plumed himself not upon it, or rather, with the modesty ever inherent to true greatness, appeared to underrate his own success. His cheek was slightly flushed, and a smile of tempered satisfaction played upon his countenance as he acknowledged the stunning applauses of the concourse before him. No traces of over-exertion or excitement were visible in his features or deportment. His brow was unclouded, his look serene, his step buoyant;—and, as his bright eye wandered over the multitude, there was not an individual upon whom his gaze momentarily rested but felt his heart leap within his breast.

The countenance of Crichton was one that Phidias might have portrayed, so nearly did its elevated and ennobled character of beauty

approach to the ideal standard of perfection erected by the great Athenian sculptor. Chiselled like those of some ancient head of the Delphic God, the features were wrought with the utmost fineness and precision—the contour of the face was classical and harmonious—the *mens divinior* breathed from every lineament — the lips were firm, full, and fraught with sensibility, yet giving token of the most dauntless resolution—the chin was proudly curved—the nose Grecian—the nostril thin and haughty as that of an unbroken barb of the desert—the brow was ample and majestical, shaded by hair of lightest brown, disposed in thick ringlets after the manner of the antique.* There was a brilliancy of colour and a sparkling freshness in Crichton's complexion, the more surprising, as the pallid hue and debilitated look of the toil-worn student might more naturally be expected in his features, than the rosy bloom of health. In compli-

* Crichton is described in the letter of Aldus Manutius to the Duke of Sora, given in the preface, as "*grande di statura, di pelo biondo, et d'aspetto bellissimo.*"

ance with the fashion of the day, a slight moustache feathered his upper lip, and a short, pointed beard, clothed his chin, adding to the grave manliness of his aspect.

One blemish, if such it could with propriety be termed, existed in Crichton's physiognomy. Around his right eye was stamped a faint roseate mark, as is evidenced by Aldus Manutius, who, in his dedication to Crichton, of the Paradoxes of Cicero has said, "*cum te omnes signo rubeæ rosæ, quod tibi Natura circa dextrum lumen impressit, tanquam unicam et raram in terris avem, homines cognoscerent.*" This defect would scarcely be worth mentioning, inasmuch as it by no means detracted from the beauty and expression of his countenance, and, indeed, could scarcely be detected except by very near observance, were not its statement necessary to the perfect individuality of the portrait which we wish to present to the reader.

Crichton's attire, which partook more of his chivalrous than of his scholastic character, was that of a complete cavalier of the period, and

was calculated to display to its utmost advantage the faultless symmetry of figure with which Nature, not less lavish than Art and Science in her gifts, had endowed him. A doublet of white damask, slashed with black bands of the same material, crossed by other bands so as to form a sort of grating, buttoned from the throat to the girdle, and fitting closely to the person, revealed the outline of his full Antinous-like chest, as well as his slender circumference of waist; while the just proportions of his lower limbs were as accurately defined by the satin hauts-de-chausses, similar in colour to his doublet, and similarly slashed, in which they were enveloped. A short and singularly cut Spanish cloak of black velvet, edged with gold lace, hung from his left shoulder, and descended as low as the elbow. His arms were a rapier and poignard suspended from a richly ornamented girdle. Boots of buff-skin, sharply pointed at the toe, as was then the mode, were fitted upon feet that seemed almost diminutive in comparison with the lofty stature

of the wearer. His broad-rimmed, steeple-crowned hat of black felt was looped with a diamond buckle, and crested by a single green feather.

To the modern observer, perhaps, the triple folds of his ruff and the voluminous width of his sleeve might appear formal and redundant; but these exuberances were then altogether unnoticed, or possibly regarded with as much complacency as a sleeve *à gigot* might be at the present time. In sooth, despite its stiffness and extravagance, there was something picturesque and imposing in the court costume of Henri III. (who, if he had no especial genius for monarchy, had unquestionably a great talent for the toilet), that amply redeemed its incongruities of taste. Crichton's figure, however, owed little to the adventitious circumstance of dress, and in fact was wholly independent of it.

As he lingered for an instant beneath the shadow of the archway, the Rector laid his hand upon his shoulder, with the intention, apparently, of arresting for a short space his

further progress. He was not, perhaps, unwilling to afford the junior members of the University, who had been debarred from attending the disputation, a momentary opportunity of noting the striking personal appearance of one, whose name would long be associated with its annals—or it might be that he was influenced by some ulterior motive. Whatever occasioned the delay, it was a matter of gratulation to the scholars, who renewed their applauses in consequence.

By this time, all the more distinguished auditors of the disputation, including the Governor of Paris, the Ambassadors, the Vicomte de Joyeuse, and the Baron D'Épernon, who, with some others, (ushered forth by the Grand Master of the College of Navarre, Doctor Launoi, and escorted by the two principals of Dialectics and Philosophy,) had followed close upon the steps of the Rector, were drawn up in a small phalanx beside them, and appeared to await their further movements. Amidst this group the stately figures and magnificent accoutrements

of the two favourites of the King stood out conspicuously. Both were esteemed the flower of the chivalry of their time, and both were equally remarkable for their gallantry, their good looks, and reckless courage. Of Joyeuse it has been said by Voltaire that,

> *De tous les favoris qu' idolâtrait Valois,*
> *Qui flattoient sa mollesse, et lui donnaient des lois,*
> *Joyeuse, né d'un sang chez les Français insigne,*
> *D'une faveur si haute était le moins indigne:*
> *Il avait des vertus.**

Neither was Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, Baron D'Épernon, without many brilliant qualities. To his vigour and address, Henri was subsequently indebted for the preservation of his throne; and to him perhaps might be traced the ultimate overthrow of the Guises, whom he bitterly hated, and uniformly opposed.

D'Épernon still wore a suit of sables in memory of his brother in arms, Saint-Mégrin,

* *Henriade, Chant III.*

assassinated by order, it was supposed, of the Duke of Mayenne, on suspicion of an intrigue with his sister-in-law, the Duchess of Guise. His mourning, however, was of the most costly description, and his black mantle was embroidered with the cross of the Holy Ghost in orange-coloured velvet, passmented with silver, of which newly-instituted order he, as well as his companion, was a Knight Commander. Joyeuse was radiant in orange-coloured satin, and velvet of the most dazzling hues. Nothing could be more splendid than his attire, unless perhaps it was that of René de Villequier, who, being also a Knight Commander of the Holy Ghost, was upon this occasion bedizened in all the finery of its full paraphernalia, the doublet and chausses of silver tissue, and the sweeping mantle of black velvet bordered with fleurs-de-lis of gold and tongues of flame, intermingled with the royal cipher. From the necks of all three, suspended by a blue riband, hung the decoration of the lesser order, a small elaborately-chased cross and dove of silver.

We must not omit to state, that amongst

this group were to be seen the Abbé de Brantôme and the poet Ronsard.

Brantôme had a piercing eye, a thin visage, and a slightly aquiline nose. Immense moustaches clothed his long upper lip, but his lofty brow was almost entirely destitute of hair. There was much of the courtier in his manner. But his smile was sarcastic, and a vein of irony might be detected even in his most flowery compliments. A sneer was habitual to his lips, and his eye, though full and keen, was inclosed within lids of a pinkish hue and blear expression, sufficiently indicating the libertinage of his character. His attire was that of the court fashion. His doublet was of deep blue, slashed with white, the colours of Marguerite de Valois, whose miniature he wore attached to a chain of medallions. He bore, also, the order of St. Michael, then, however, in great disrepute, and called *le Collier à toute bête.* The Abbé de Brantôme was then a man of middle age, somewhat on the wane; and his frame appeared prematurely withered; his shoulders were bent, and his legs shrunk within his hose. His look was sharp, sus-

picious, penetrating; and his general manner that of a shrewd and accurate observer.

Age, and perhaps the life of sensuality he was known to have led, had committed sad havoc upon the once well-favoured person of the poet Ronsard. He was no longer the *beau Page* whose manner fascinated Mary of Scotland. Nor was he what he sung of himself, when, near his fortieth year, he said—

Trente et sept ans passez, et encore n'ai je atteint
D'ans, ni de maladie, et en tout les sortes
Mes nerfs dont bien tendus, et mes veines biens fortes;
Et si j'ai le teint palle, et le cheveu grison
Mes membres toutefois sont hors de saison.

He now complained both of ill health and years. Such locks as remained to him had become a "sable silvered." His tint of skin was dull and deadly pale; and, so grievously tormented was he with his old enemy, the gout, that he was compelled to support his frame, at least on the present occasion, upon a crutch. Nevertheless, though coarse and gross of person, the countenance of the poet was handsome and intelligent, and, except when

an awkward twinge crossed it, expressive of extreme good humour.

"Methinks, my dear Lord Abbé," said Ronsard, looking around with some uneasiness, and addressing Brantôme, "it were scarce wise to have called together this tumultuous array. Our Cæsar may be crowned in the Capitol while we are sacrificed at his ovation. I am too well acquainted with the force of the poet's words—

Monstrari digito et dicier 'hic est'—

as occasionally exemplified towards me by the students, to desire any further illustration of their abilities in my own person."

"You have changed your tune since the reception of your last masque, brother bard," said Chicot, who had forced himself unperceived amongst them. "These same Scholars, I remember, were once the only patrons of the Muses. Now they have lost their discrimination. But give yourself no trouble: you will pass unnoticed this time depend on't

gossip. Even I, you see, for a marvel, have escaped attention."

"Then, of a surety, I will put myself under thy escort," said the Poet, seizing the arm of the Jester. "It was the abandonment of folly that hath brought me into disrepute. Thou shalt help me to amend. But what hath brought one of thy calling into the haunts of wisdom, my merry gossip?"

"Wisdom and folly are nearer akin than you suppose," returned Chicot, "and fools who have soared to a greater height than I can ever aspire, have been caught within these owl-roosts. I like a fine sight as well as my neighbours: and though I care not to be be-spattered with a shower of *ans* and *utrums*, or sit out a twelve-hours' bout of rhetoric and philosophy, where, if one man hath not all the talk to himself, he, at least, doth his best to silence his comrades, I am mightily pleased to come in, as it were, for the last act of a dull comedy, and to enjoy a laugh at the veteran stagers who have been driven off the boards by a youthful actor

who, though he hath spent but a tithe of the time in the service, understandeth their craft better than themselves."

"Have a care, sirrah," said Brantôme; "thou art within hearing of the noble Crichton."

"The noble Crichton will acquit me of flattery, then," rejoined the Jester. "I am one of those who speak truth behind a man's back, and falsehood to his face, and care not to avouch it. Pierre de Bourdeille, a word in thine ear! Thou wearest thy mistress's colours on thy pourpoint, and her miniature at thy neck, but she hath another image than thine at her heart. Take a fool's counsel, and forget her."

The Rector, meanwhile, who had, apparently much against Crichton's inclination, detained him in earnest conversation at the portal, now turned towards the Scholars, intimating his intention of addressing them. The clamour ceased as soon as his gestures were understood, and there was a profound silence as he spoke.

"Messieurs Scholars of the University of Paris," said the Rector, "you have already learned, I doubt not, that your most erudite doctors and professors have this day sustained a defeat; a defeat, however, which, while it reflects no disgrace on the conquered, enhances the glory of the victor. In the whole circle of science and learning the noble Crichton hath approved his supremacy; and we willingly surrender to him our laurels. May he long continue to wear them, and may his career, the dawn of which is so brilliant, be equally glorious at its close! Like the great Poet Dante he came hither unknown —like Dante he departeth with a reputation which will be blazed throughout all the schools of Europe. In earnest of the profound admiration, which, in common with all the principals of the University, I entertain for his transcendent abilities and matchless scholarship, in their names and in my own name, in your behalf and in that of every member of the University by whom learning is reverenced, and with whom

genius is held sacred, I would tender for his acceptance, as a mark of our esteem and veneration, this ring; which I trust he will not disdain to wear upon his person, as a trophy of the conquest he has this day achieved, and in remembrance of the University he has vanquished. And that every member of the University may participate in this expression of our sentiments towards the Admirable Crichton, I have taken this public opportunity of their manifestation. Scholars of Paris, have I not your approval and concurrence?"

A thunder of applause succeeded the Rector's oration, and a thousand hurrahs responded to his appeal.

All eyes were now turned to Crichton, who, it was evident, only awaited a cessation of the clamour to address the assemblage in his turn. Silence was instantly commanded; and scarce a breath was drawn as he spoke, so intent were all upon catching each syllable that fell from his lips.

"When the Phœnix of his age," began

Crichton, in a voice distinct and musical, "and the favourite of the Muses, Picus of Mirandola, was proffered all the honours of the Roman School, he declined them, saying that he felt his own unworthiness, and that he had acquired more distinction than was his due in having obtained a hearing at their hands. In imitation of the conduct of this illustrious Prince, though with far less claim to the same honourable note, I would say that I neither deserve nor desire further distinction than I have gained. Fortune has already favoured me beyond my deserts. I have engaged in amicable strife with men whose intellectual superiority I am ready to acknowledge, and who, if I have worsted them in argument, have been foiled solely because I made a better choice of weapons, and happened to be the more skilful in their use. I am not blinded by self-esteem; I attribute not my victory to other than its right causes. Like most of the great events of life, its issue may have been the result of chance, which has upon this occasion declared itself

in my favour. Were the contest to be renewed on the morrow, I might be placed in the position of my opponents. Courtesy to a stranger, and consideration for his youth, may have restrained my adversaries from putting forth their strength. Some such feelings have, no doubt, had their influence. Grant, however, that I have triumphed—you have bestowed upon me your applause—I am fully requited. Trophies of victory which may be wrested from me as soon as won, are of little avail. Better men may appear—*Plures habet Sparta Brasidâ meliores.* My ambition has a hundred goals, which it would fain reach.

Magnum iter intendo, sed dat mihi gloria vires."

"Live Crichton! Live the Admirable Crichton—*Euge! Optime! Euge! Euge!*" shouted the Scholars.

Crichton gracefully saluted the assemblage and would have retired, had he not been withheld by the Rector.

"You must perforce accept this gem," said

he; "the gifts of the University of Paris are not wont to be slighted," and taking a brilliant diamond ring from his fore-finger, and loosening the velvet escarcelle from his sash, Messire Adrian D'Amboise presented them to Crichton.

"I may not decline your offer," said Crichton, reluctantly receiving the proffered gem "since you thus press it upon me, though I feel how little I merit it. The ring I shall prize, but as to the contents of the purse, you must suffer me to dispose of them as I shall see fitting."

"The purse is yours—do with it what you think proper, Seigneur," said the Rector.

Crichton removed the ring, and taking forth the crowns of gold with which the escarcelle was filled, threw them by handfuls amongst the crowd of Scholars. A violent commotion ensued, during which many of the students broke through the lines, and approached close to the persons of Crichton and the Rector. One of these, a youth, who for some space had held his green mantle before

his face, now rushed forward, and prostrating himself before Crichton, threw down a garland of twisted bay-leaves at his feet.

"Disdain not my offering, Signor Crichton," said he, in a low and timid voice, "simple though it be, and all unworthy your acceptance. I will myself wind it round your brows if I receive your gracious permission to do so."

"Retire, thou forward youth," said the Rector, gravely, "this is presumption."

"I pray you excuse him," said Crichton; "the compliment is too flattering to be declined; and let me add, the mode in which it is conveyed is too graceful to be unwelcome. I accept your wreath, young sir, and beg you to arise. But wherefore," added he, with a smile, "did you imagine that I should come off victorious? Surely there was nothing to warrant such a conclusion. And had I returned ingloriously, this garland would have been wholly thrown away."

The youth arose, and fixed his dark eyes full upon Crichton's countenance.

"Whatever the matchless Crichton shall undertake, in that he will excel all men," said he. "Well hath he been surnamed the '*Admirable*.' With him, to engage in a conflict is to obtain a victory. I was assured of his success."

"Your looks are sincere; and I will not distrust your words," replied Crichton. "Your face resembles one I have seen. though where I cannot call to mind. Are you of these colleges?"

"He is one of the Gelosi, Seigneur Crichton," said Ogilvy, who, together with Caravaja and the Sorbonist, had forced himself into the vicinity of Crichton. "Be not deceived by his honest look, as I have been. Hence, youth, and take thy mummeries elsewhere."

"One of the Gelosi!" exclaimed Crichton. "Ha! now I remember the features. 'Tis the youth I have seen so oft. But why avert thy head, gentle boy? I have said nothing, I trust, to wound thy feelings?"

The Geloso appeared crimsoned with shame.

"Tell me," continued Crichton, "what may mean that masked figure whom I have seen for ever hovering nigh thee in thy walks? nay, that seems like thy shadow at the Hôtel de Bourbon. Is it a device of thine own to attract curiosity, young sir? If so, I can tell thee thou hast succeeded. Even the Royal Henri has noticed the singularity of the figure."

"Have you, likewise, remarked that mask, signor?" replied the Geloso, with an expression of uneasiness almost amounting to terror. "I know not who it is, or what it may mean. I have often thought it was a trick of mine own imagination that conjured up this phantom. But you have seen it, likewise!"

"I have!" replied Crichton; "but methinks the answer you have given is somewhat evasive. I thought more of sincerity dwelt in those earnest eyes. But who would look for

candour in a player? Your present action is, I fear, an artifice to win attention."

Saying which, he turned from him. The Geloso attempted to reply, but retired abashed.

Ogilvy was about to thrust him back, but perceiving that the youth had shrouded his face within his mantle, and voluntarily withdrawn himself, he desisted.

There was something in the manner of the Mantuan that struck Crichton; and his feelings reproached him with undue severity towards the youth. Laying his hand upon his shoulder, he addressed a few words to him in a more kindly tone.

The Geloso raised his eyes. The black orbs were filled with tears. He looked with a blinded gaze on Crichton, and thence at the hand, which he still suffered to remain upon his shoulder. — Suddenly he started. — He pressed his hand across his eyes.—He cleared his vision from its tears. — He pointed to Crichton's finger.

"The ring!" exclaimed he. "Did you not place it there?"

Surprised at the youth's emotion, and at the inquiry, Crichton looked at the finger upon which he had scarce a moment ago placed the gift of the Rector. The ring was wanting.

Unable to account for this extraordinary occurrence, and not without some suspicions of the Mantuan himself, Crichton fixed a cold scrutinizing glance upon him. The Geloso shuddered slightly at the expression of his glance, but quailed not beneath it.

"He cannot have done it," thought Crichton, "falsehood could not dwell in looks so guileless."

At this instant there was a further rush amongst the scholars. Ogilvy and the Mantuan were forcibly propelled against Crichton. A knife was seen to glitter in the air. From its position it seemed to be grasped by the hand of Ogilvy. For an instant the steel was suspended over the head of Crichton. The Geloso saw it. Uttering a loud cry of warning, he threw himself in the way of the blow. The blade descended. The arms of

the Mantuan were entwined round Crichton's neck. In an instant he found himself deluged in blood.

With Crichton to draw his sword—to turn—to sustain the almost exanimate body of the Geloso was the work of an instant.

"This is the assassin!" shouted he; and with the hand that was still at liberty, and with a force that seemed almost superhuman, he grasped the throat of the paralysed Ogilvy.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENGLISH BULL-DOG.

As sure a dog as ever fought at head.—*Titus Andrioncus.*

A CRY arose amongst the Scholars that Crichton had been assassinated, and such was the confusion that prevailed in his vicinity, that for some space, the truth or falsehood of the report could not be ascertained.

The crowd were fearfully incensed. They demanded that the assassin should be given up to their vengeance. Yelling, groaning, uttering threats and imprecations, they pressed forward—at the sides, in front, in all directions. The archers stationed as a foot-guard

around the doctors and professors, were incontinently carried off their legs. The principals of the colleges immediately beat a retreat, and betook themselves for refuge to the hall of the institution they had so recently quitted. Affairs assumed a very ominous aspect. Bludgeons were waved in the air; blows were dealt indiscriminately, and many a pretended random stroke wiped off old scores with some rigid disciplinarian who had not been sufficiently alert to effect his escape. In vain did the Rector strive to check this rising storm. His voice, wont to be listened to with awe, was unheard or unheeded amid the tumult.

"Los aux Ecoles!" shouted the scholars, pressing forward.

"Los aux Ecoles!" cried Chicot, who, safely ensconced within the gateway, eyed the raging mob at a distance. "I never hear that cry, but I think of the screaming of a pack of gulls, before a tempest. Mischief is sure to be brewing."

"Their cursed croaking resembles that of

the frogs in Aristophanes," said Ronsard—"would it might end in crocitation! I prophesied ill from the moment I beheld this rabble."

"I trust you will rather approve yourself *Vates* in its poetic, than its prophetic sense," replied Brantôme. "I own my mind misgives me."

"Methinks, monseigneur," said the Marquis de Villequier to the Rector, "it were well to nip this rebellion in the bud. Some lives may else be lost. See—they approach the assassin—they seize him—they drag him from the grasp of Crichton. Mort-dieu! they will tear him in pieces—this must be prevented, we must not stand by and see butchery like this committed."

"The cowardly assassins!" shouted Joyeuse, "Crichton himself will be endangered. By my halidom! I will bring down my archers upon them!—"

"Stay, my Lord, an instant, I implore of you," said the Rector, "my presence will restrain their violence. I will go amongst

them myself—they dare not disobey my mandates."

And accompanied by the Grand Master of the College of Navarre, the Rector forced his way towards the principal scene of strife.

"Give them this further chance," said D'Épernon to the Vicomte, who was chafing, like a high-mettled steed, with impatience. "If they heed not their Rector then—"

"Los aux Ecoles!" replied Chicot, with a laugh. "We shall have a pleasant specimen of their chivalry anon. By my marotte, they are in no mood to listen to a dissertation now."

"'Tis a waste of time," cried Joyeuse, "forbearance is thrown away; even majesty is not held sacred by these felon Scholars. How can their Rector expect obedience from them? To my side, Larchant—en avant!" Drawing his sword, and attended by the Captain of the Guard, the Vicomte flung himself headlong into the press.

Intelligence that Crichton was unhurt somewhat abated the frenzy of the multi-

tude. Still they were vehemently excited. Ogilvy had been dragged from Crichton's grasp, and was threatened with instant immolation. Deprived of utterance by the choaking gripe, from which he had only been delivered to encounter a fate more terrible; stunned by the buffets of the students, it was only in this perilous extremity that he recovered his power of speech. With a force that could only have been given him by despair, he burst from their hold and shouted to his countryman for aid. He was instantly retaken, and his cries drowned by a roar of mockery from the ruthless mob.

"Call on Crichton for protection!" shouted Caravaja, who had been a prominent instrument in assailing the unfortunate Scot, and who indulged in a savage rejoicing at his situation. "As well might the serpent sue for protection to the heel it hath bitten, as thou implore succour from him thou wouldst have slain. But thy countryman, thou seest, turns a deaf ear to thy plaints—ha! ha!"

"Surely mine ears deceived me," said Crichton, who with his broidered kerchief had busied himself in staunching the wound of the Geloso, and who had only caught this latter exclamation of the Spaniard. "Can it be that the assassin is countryman of mine?"

"'Tis even so, Señor Crichton," replied Caravaja. "To his eternal infamy be it spoken."

"Hear me, noble Crichton!" shouted Ogilvy, whom the Spaniard vainly endeavoured to silence. "Think me not guilty of this foul offence. I care not for death, but I would not die dishonoured. I would not perish charged with a deed which my soul abhorreth. I am no assassin. I am Jasper Ogilvy of Balfour."

"Hold!" exclaimed Crichton, consigning his yet inanimate burthen to the care of a bystander, and pressing towards Ogilvy, "let me speak with this man. Give me some token that I may know thou art he, whom thou callest thyself. Thy voice brings back bygone days. But I can discern nought of

Jasper Ogilvy in those blood-stained features."

"You would not know my visage, were it freed from its stain," returned Ogilvy. "We both have grown to manhood since we met. But you will call to mind a moonlight cruise upon the lake of Cluny, years ago, when a life was saved from perishing beneath its waters. To me the recollection of that deed hath been ever dear; to-day, it hath been a proud one.—No matter; let me establish my truth with you, honoured Sir, and these hell-hounds may do their worst."

"You have said enough. I am satisfied, more than satisfied," replied Crichton. "Messieurs, release this Gentleman. He is wholly guiltless of the crime laid to his charge. I will answer for him with my life."

The Scholars replied with a laugh of incredulity. "We have only *his* word for his innocence," replied the Bernardin. "Appearances are sadly against him."

"This knife was within his vest, when we dragged him from the Señor Crichton," added Caravaja, holding up an ensanguined blade.

"Por los Revelationes de San Juan! this, methinks, is proof unanswerable."

A volley of execrations answered this appeal to the passions of the multitude.

"Thou liest," cried Ogilvy, struggling to set free his hands; "that poignard is thine own; *my* dirk hangs at my girdle—would it were now within my grasp!"

"Produce the weapon, then," said Caravaja. And he thrust his hand into the Scot's torn doublet. "Ha!" exclaimed he suddenly, "what have I found! Por nuestra Señora! 'tis the diamond ring, with the cipher of the University. He is a robber as well as an assassin."

A sudden light seemed to break upon Crichton.

"There is some mystery here," cried he. "Let the accuser and the accused both be brought before the Rector."

A murmur arose amongst the Scholars. "He would shield his countryman," they cried; "*we* are satisfied of his guilt."

"But ye are not to constitute yourselves his

judges," replied Crichton, sternly. "Deliver him to the proper authorities, and let that Spaniard who stands forth his accuser, be secured."

"Mighty well!" returned Caravaja. "All I get for my exertions in seizing the assassin, is to be accused of the crime myself. But if you are so readily gulled by your countryman's subterfuge, Señor Crichton, *my* comrades are not so easily imposed upon. Hijo di Dios! they know me too well to suspect me of any such enormity."

"The Scholars of Paris are apt to take the law into their own hands upon occasions like the present, where the guilt of the offender is manifestly established," said the Sorbonist. "It is the part of their privileges to adjudicate their own causes, and they are always willing to abide by the consequences of their own decisions. We have sentenced this man to run the gauntlet of the schools, and, by the soul of Robert of Sorbon, he shall not escape. Why delay we, comrades?"

"Ay, wherefore?" added Caravaja.

"Beware!" shouted Crichton, in a voice of thunder, "how you proceed to further acts of violence. My respect for your University has thus long withheld me. But I will not stand by and see outrage committed."

"I am with you, noble Crichton," said the English student, Simon Blount, advancing towards him, and still followed by his huge bull-dog, whose breadth of chest, short limbs, and bluff visage, greatly resembled his own square proportions, stout legs, and burly physiognomy. "Your countryman shall suffer no wrong, while I have a staff to wield, or a blade to draw in his defence. And as to the merits of his case, I have as little doubt of his innocence, as I have assurance of yon cut-throat Spaniard's guilt. But in any case, he shall not be put to death without judge or jury. What, ho! Druid," added he, glancing significantly at his enormous dog, "it will be time to slip thy muzzle in case these curs show their teeth."

At this conjuncture, the Rector and the Doctor Launoi made their appearance.

"Hear me, my children," said Adrian D'Amboise, in a loud voice, "justice shall be dealt upon this Scot. Deliver him into the custody of the sergeant of the guard now in attendance upon me. I pledge myself to the instant examination of his case. What more can you require? By your threatened violence you will only add one crime to another, and increase the scandal you have already occasioned to the University of Paris in the esteem of its illustrious visitants."

Crichton conferred an instant with the Rector, who apparently acquiesced in the propriety of the suggestion made to him.

"Disperse at once, and let each man seek his respective college," continued Adrian D'Amboise, with some severity. "Sergeants, advance, and seize upon the persons of Jasper Ogilvy, of the Ecossais, and Diego Caravaja, of Narbonne. Messieurs, give him your aid. Ah! do you hesitate?—is it possible that you venture to disobey the paternal injunctions of the Father of the University—what frenzy is this?"

A sullen murmur ran through the scholastic battalion; and such was its threatening aspect, that the sergeant of the guard hesitated to obey the commands of the Rector.

"Why should we respect his mandates?" growled the Sorbonist. "'Tis plain we are but lightly considered at his paternal hands. Let the *Father* of the University tell us why his *children* were excluded from the disputation this morning, and we will then perpend the propriety of compliance with his request."

"Ay, let him answer that," said the Bernardin.

"'Twould shrewdly perplex him to do so," rejoined Caravaja. "By the perdition of the world, I will surrender myself to no man living, sergeant or Rector, Scot or Englishman; and to show them how little I regard their threats, if no other hand can be found to smite this starveling bravo, mine shall deal the first blow."

Caravaja raised his knife with the intent to strike. At that instant, however, he was seized by a nervous grasp, and hurled forcibly

backwards with such force, that, muttering an inarticulate oath, he fell heavily to the ground. Crichton, for it was by his hand that the Spaniard had been prostrated, threw himself amongst the ranks of the Scholars with such irresistible force, that their united efforts were unable to withstand him. Shaking off Ogilvy's captors, he placed a poignard within his grasp, and, drawing his own sword, calmly awaited the further assault of the students.

Rugged and resolute, and, withal, savage if aroused, as the bull-dog at his heels, Blount followed closely in his rear. Confining himself to the warding off a few blows, aimed at Crichton, he at first dealt none in return; but he could not long act upon the defensive. A rude buffet on the head aroused all his ire. He then laid about him in right earnest, and with such good will and determination, that an opponent dropped for every blow of his cudgel, which, in passing, we may remark, was not a vine-wood staff, but a huge English crab-stick, seasoned, knotty, and substantial, almost as the bearer's self. The might of

twenty threshers seemed to reside in Blount's single arm. Sconces were cracked by him with as much ease as a boy for pastime would beat in pieces as many gourds. The scion of Harcourt ventured to oppose his estoc against the Englishman's club. The sophister, however, had now a more difficult thesis to maintain than any he had hitherto defended. His postulate was effectually blanked by Blount's knotty rejoinder. Yielding to the weighty blow, the supple vine-staff fled from his grasp, spinning through the air to a considerable distance, while the arm that sustained it, shattered by the stroke, sank powerless to his side.

Meantime Ogilvy and Crichton were not left unmolested. Placed back to back, both stood in postures of defence.

Uttering frightful yells, and brandishing their staves, the Scholars furiously commenced the assault. Blows thick as hail were showered against Crichton's person. His sword glanced around him like a stream of light. He appeared invulnerable. Not a

blow took effect. Caravaja, who had regained his feet, was amongst the foremost of his assailants. "By St. James of Compostella!" roared he, "I will wash out in his blood, the stain he hath put on our Academies, and on myself. Give way; look to thyself, proud Scot." And pressing forward, he made a desperate thrust at Crichton.

Caravaja was no contemptible swordsman. But he had to do with an antagonist unequalled in the art of self-defence. His thrust was parried with infinite dexterity, and after the exchange of a few fierce and rapid passes, his long Toledo was wrenched from his grasp, and he lay at the mercy of his adversary. Crichton, however, forbore to strike; but dismissed his foe as one unworthy of his steel. Gnashing his teeth with rage, Caravaja sought a new weapon; and encouraging each other by shouts and cries, the Scholars still pressed madly on.

One amongst their number, of colossal stature, noted amongst his brethren for his extraordinary athletic feats, and rejoicing

in the Rabelaisian *sobriquet* of Loupgarou, (which the readers of the admirable abstracter of the Quintessence will remember as the name of the vasty chieftain against whom the good Pantagruel so valiantly demeaned himself), wielding not a wooden staff but a bar of iron, advanced deliberately towards him. Watching his opportunity when Crichton was engaged on all sides, he discharged a tremendous blow at his head. The ponderous weapon descended. But Crichton had foreseen the stroke and averted it, not, however, without some loss. Such was the force of the blow, that his sword blade, though of the best tempered steel, was shivered at the hilt.

It was now that Crichton's great personal strength, and remarkable activity in its display, stood him in admirable stead. Without allowing his gigantic antagonist time to repeat his blow, he sprang forward and grappled him with an energy that shook his Herculean frame to its foundation. The Antæus of the Schools reeled. For the first time he had met with his match. Locked in

Crichton's cramping gripe, Loupgarou could neither disentangle his right arm, nor bring his unwieldly powers into play. He could scarcely even draw breath. His brawny chest heaved like a labouring mountain. Exhausting himself in ill-directed attempts at liberation, he floundered like a whale when assailed by the sea-unicorn.

Confident of the result of the strife, and unwilling to deprive their champion of the entire honours of conquest, the Scholars suspended further hostilities against Crichton, and directed their attacks against Ogilvy and Blount. Abandoned by his comrades, Loupgarou was ashamed to roar for aid, and experienced some such qualms as fell to the share of his namesake, when struggling within the clutch of the redoubted Pantagruel. Like a tower shaken from its equilibrium by the blast of the miner, he was observed to totter on his base, and, with a concussion heard above the din of the fray, he fell to the ground, deprived of sense and motion.

Snatching the bar from the relaxed grasp

of his adversary, Crichton was about to rejoin his comrades, when his attention was suddenly drawn to a new quarter. Hearing his own name called upon, as he thought, by the voice of the Geloso, followed by a loud shriek for help, he strove to force his way in the direction of the sound.

Ogilvy, meantime, found an unexpected and most efficient ally in the shape of the Englishman's dog, Druid. Galled by the fierce and pertinacious assaults of his enemies, Blount suddenly slipped the muzzle of the savage animal, and giving him encouragement by voice and gesture speedily created a diversion in their favour.

First was heard the sullen growl, deepening to an awful roar, of the furious brute. His enormous lips curled upwards — his brow became corrugated with a thousand folds of wrinkled skin—his eyes glared—his fangs glistened. He rushed at the Scholars. Blount directed his attacks, and cheered him on. Blows availed nothing against the tough hide of the hardy creature, and served only to

incense him. He raged amongst them like a wolf in a lamb-pasture.

The scene was terrible, yet not untinged by the ludicrous. Fain would the students have taken to their heels, but retreat was impossible. Those behind pushed forward the ranks in front. Shrieks and execrations evidenced the devastation of the relentless pursuer. His teeth met in the legs of one, in the arms of another, in the throat of a third. "The devil is let loose amongst us, in the shape of a hound!" cried the Scholars. "Avoid thee, Sathanas!—*vade retro!*" But Druid was insensible to conjuration or entreaty. Shaking his huge jowl, and displaying anew his formidable fangs, he prepared himself for fresh exhibitions of his prowess.

A space was now cleared around Blount and Ogilvy by their stanch partisan. With his back on the ground; his face shielded by his hands to protect himself from the teeth of the dog, by whom he had been pinned to the earth, lay the prostrate form of the Bernardin. Planting his heavy paws upon his neck, and

sprawling over the body of the half-dead scholar, Druid upturned his glowing eyeballs to his master, as if to enquire whether or not he should complete his work of destruction. It was a critical moment for the Bernardin.

Just then, however, the clatter of swords, the trampling of steeds, and shouts of "Joyeuse, to the rescue!" announced that the Vicomte had reached his company of archers. With a swoop like that of an eagle upon a flock of meaner fowl—and with his charger rearing into the air, Joyeuse dashed amongst the multitude.

On the other hand came the halberdiers of the Rector and the lacqueys of the Marquess de Villequier with bills and partisans; and, furthermore, the crowd was invested to the right by the well-disciplined ordinaries of the Scottish guard, under the command of the Baron D'Épernon. Thus menaced on all sides, the scholars found themselves in an awkward predicament. At first there was a murmur of "Down with the minions!—Down with the Scottish *coupejarrets!*" but

these cries were speedily silenced. A few strokes from the blunt edges of the swords of the guardsmen, and their staves were thrown to the ground in token of submission

CHAPTER V.

THE ASTROLOGER.

Icy pres, dist Epistemon, demoure Her Trippa, vous sçavez comment par art d'Astrologie, Geomantie, Chiromantie, et aultres de pareille farine il predict toutes choses futures; conferons de vostre affaire avec lui. De cela, respondit Panurge, je ne sçay rien.—RABELAIS. *Pantagruel, Liv.* III.

THE by-stander to whom Crichton committed the inanimate Geloso, when he rushed to the assistance of Ogilvy, received his charge with an eager readiness, that almost appeared as if he had anticipated the event. Shielding his burthen with his arms, and unwilling, it would seem, to attract further attention, he endeavoured to extricate himself from the crowd.

He was a little old man, of singular and inauspicious appearance, dressed in a flowing robe of black taffata, lined with flame-coloured silk, and edged with sable fur. In lieu of doublet and hose, he wore a rich gown of crimson velvet, fastened round the waist with a silken cord, in which was stuck a costly purse, embroidered with the arms of Catherine de Medicis. A collar of medallions, graven with cabalistic characters, hung over his shoulder, and upon his head he wore a small scull-cap of purple velvet. He bore neither arms nor device of any sort beyond the blazon of the Queen-Mother. His forehead would have appeared venerable from its height, baldness, and innumerable wrinkles, had not his black scowling brows given it a sinister and portentous look. His temples were hollow and sunken; his cheeks emaciated; the colour of his skin was sallow and jaundiced, and its texture like that of shrivelled parchment. His glances were sly and furtive; his nose was high and aquiline, tufted between the eyes with a clump of

dusky hair; the whole expression of his features was crafty, suspicious, malignant. When erect, his stature might have been lofty, but his height was now dwindled to insignificance, by his stooping shoulders and contracted spine. His distorted joints concealed from view by the ample folds of his drapery had been wrenched from their sockets, and but ill restored, during his confinement in the Bastile, where he had been incarcerated and tortured for supposed practices of sorcery, during the reign of Charles IX.

Cosmo Ruggieri, by birth a Florentine, by vocation a mathematician, alchemist, nay even bard,—officiated as chief astrologer to Catherine de Medicis, by whom he was brought to Paris, and whose favour he enjoyed. It was to her influence that he owed his deliverance from the rack and the dungeon; his escape with life; his subsequent advancement to court favour under her third son Henri, for whose accession to the throne, it was said, indeed, he had

paved the way by the removal of his brothers, Francis II. and Charles IX., and by whom, latitudinarian and heretical, if not wholly heathenish and abominable as his tenets were known to be, he was advanced to the ecclesiastical dignity of Abbé of Saint Mahé, in Brittany. It was to the protection of her powerful arm that, although surrounded by open and secret foes, he was enabled to pursue his mysterious career unmolested;—and it was to her he was indebted for the wonderful state information which he possessed. In return for these obligations, the stars were nightly consulted for the Queen-Mother (a queen who boasted that she ruled by the hands of her sons), and on all emergencies Catherine had recourse to his counsel. Ruggieri was blindly devoted to her will, and mainly instrumental in the execution of her hidden projects and machinations. Darker imputations were laid to his charge. All the unholy practices, to which the superstition of the age attached credence, were attributed

to him. He was said to be deeply versed in necromantic lore; to be addicted to witchcraft and idolatry; to preside at the wizards' sabbaths; to traffic in the charnel merchandize of Montfaucon; and, lastly, to feast upon the flesh of still-born infants. Ruggieri, however, did not stand alone. To such an extent did the practice of judicial astrology prevail in this and the preceding reign, that the number of professors in that occult science was estimated at thirty thousand, a calculation almost incredible, if we take into consideration the number of dupes necessarily required for their support. Be this as it may, Ruggieri flourished. But then it was whispered, that he had another and more terrible source of lucre. The slow and subtle poisons of Florentine origin, whose treacherous effect was manifested in the gradual decay of the victim, were said to be brewed by him. The blood that nightly bathed the couch of Charles IX. was supposed to be the consequence of one of these diabolical potions. The monarch died, and

Ruggieri had an enemy the less. But such was the dread entertained of his villainous drugs, that a cup of wine would have fallen from the grasp of the boldest Bacchanal, had it been thought to be medicated by Cosmo Ruggieri.

By the side of this redoubted magician was a dumb African slave of the most diminutive size and fantastic configuration, who had the reputation of being his familiar. Had he at all resembled his master, this attendant might have been deemed his shadow, so constantly did he track his footsteps; but strange as was the appearance of the sorcerer, that of his dwarf was many degrees more grotesque. Hideously deformed and hunchbacked, Elberich (for so was the creature named) was so short in comparison with his width and girth, that, when moving, his squat rotundity of figure looked like a rolling ball of soot, in which, in place of eyes, two flaming carbuncles had been set; when motionless, he appeared like a black, bloated, baboon, perched on its nether end. His huge feet were visible;

but of his legs no traces could be detected. The machinery by which he moved was concealed. His arms were short and lean; his hands lank and webbed liked the fins of a seal.

Aided by his dwarf, from whose contact all recoiled with disgust, Ruggieri had but little difficulty in making good his retreat; and having gained the shelter of a flying buttress of the college wall, in the angle of which he was secure from interruption and annoyance, he turned his attention to the restoration of his charge. The wound, which appeared to have glanced down the shoulder, had been partially stanched by Crichton. The handkerchief was around the arm. The hurt did not appear a serious one, and Ruggieri had recourse to certain restoratives of the suspended animal functions, which, ever mindful of the character he assumed, he fortunately carried about his person.

As he removed the black and clustering ringlets, fallen in disorder over the features of the Geloso, Ruggieri could not help being

struck by their exceeding loveliness. The cheek had indeed lost the warm suffusion that, like a glow of sunshine on a snowy peak, had lit up its bright southern complexion—the mellow olive hue had congealed into marble whiteness. But the face was not less beautiful. It was the difference merely between a statue and a breathing thing: and Ruggieri perused the lineaments of the statue with something of the rapturous earnestness of a virtuoso. He peered into every line with increasing wonder. It was not so much the harmony and regularity of the youth's features that struck the astrologer with astonishment — as the softness and smoothness of the skin — the polished whiteness of the throat, on which the azure veins were traced like wandering threads. These were what chiefly excited his admiration. He became lost in thought, and grew so much absorbed in contemplation of the Geloso's countenance, that he wholly neglected to apply the phial of pungent spirit, which he held extended for that purpose in his grasp.

Throwing back the hair as far as it would admit, Ruggieri examined more narrowly the snowy forehead of the Geloso; thence his glance wandered to the face with renewed surprise. The eyes were closed. But the dark orbs could almost be seen through the lucid lids. Then, those long silken lashes—that dark and pencilled brow—those nostrils, fine and thin—those lips so delicately carved! The astrologer was lost in amazement. He took the small white hand that hung listlessly at the youth's side; he opened it, and intently perused its lines. A shade came over his own countenance, as he pursued his study. He passed his hand over his brow; a sudden emotion shook his frame.

"Spirit of Sambethe!" exclaimed he, "can this be? Can I have been so long in error? Can the heavenly influences have so long deceived their votary?—Impossible! True, the planets have of late assumed evil and malevolent aspects—menacing me with ill. Saturn hath rule within the Chamber of Death. The Lord of the Third House was

combust and retrograde within the Eleventh, presaging peril from the hand of a stranger. This day, this hour, is pregnant with calamity. I foresaw my danger, but I foresaw likewise the means whereby it might be averted. Within my path stands Crichton. He is the foe by whom I am threatened. This day links his fate with mine, and with that of another. That other is my safeguard—that other is within my arms. One of us must perish. A thick curtain hangs between me and the event. Curses on my own imperfect skill, which will only enable me to see so far and no farther. But I may ward off the stroke."

And he again returned to his scrutiny of the Geloso's countenance.

"Wherefore is it," continued he, musing, "that as I gaze upon these beautiful yet death-like features, a thousand forgotten fancies should be awakened within my bosom? That face, though lovelier far, recalls to me the image of one long since buried in oblivion, unheard, unthought of, swallowed within the womb of time—it recalls to me dreams of

youth, of passion, fever, delirium, crime; of a deed of which I will not even think. Who is this youth? or rather, unless mine eyes are wholly sightless, or dim to ought save the midnight glories of the heavens, who is this——"

The reverie of the Astrologer was interrupted by a slight convulsive attempt at respiration on the part of the Geloso. Ruggieri applied the phial, and, with a trembling hand, proceeded to unclasp the youth's doublet to give him greater freedom in breathing. In removing the folds of the blood-stained linen, the heaving bosom of a young and lovely female was revealed to his view. His eye glistened through its film.

"'Tis as I suspected," muttered the Astrologer, "a girl in masquerade attire. Most probably the fool hath lost her heart to Crichton—if so she will be a useful agent. I have need of such a one in my designs upon him. Ha! what have we here?—an amulet—no, by Hermes, a small key of gold, of antique fashioning attached to a chain of the same metal, which from its exquisite

workmanship, I judge to be of Venice. Ah, fair maiden, I have here, no doubt, a clue to your history, of which I may avail myself hereafter! By your leave, this key is mine."

Little scrupulous as to the means of accomplishing any object he might have in view, Ruggieri without hesitation, unfastened the chain, and was about to commit it to the custody of his pouch, when he was alarmed by a monitory signal from his sable attendant.

The sound uttered by the dwarf resembled the hissing of a startled snake. Indeed, the vocal powers of the wretched creature only ranged between gibbering and sibilation: by the former, he expressed his rejoicing, by the latter his fears. The Astrologer well knew how to interpret the present boding noise. Following the direction of the dwarf's red and glowing orbs, he caught sight of a figure, upon which the angry mannikin was glowering, puffing, and spitting like an owl disturbed by some prowling specimen of the furry tribe. The figure was masked, and

muffled within the folds of a large sable cloak; and ere Ruggieri could thrust the chain of gold into his girdle, the intruder was by his side.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASK.

Don Garcia.—Qu'est-ce alors
Que ce Masque?—Tenez, le voilà.—VICTOR HUGO. *Hernani.*

THE Astrologer could not conceal his uneasiness. He eyed the Mask with suspicion, not unmingled with fear.

"Be not alarmed, father," said the figure, addressing Ruggieri. "I am a friend."

"What assurance have I of that?" returned the Astrologer doubtfully. "Your speech I own is fair, but your guise and deportment are not calculated to inspire confidence. We are not in Venice, Signor Maschera. Your garb will not pass current here, as in our ultra-montane capitals. The good citizens of

Paris deem the mask but an indifferent excuse for intrusion: and I have been long enough amongst them to acquire some of their foolish notions on this head. Your pardon, Signor, if I misconceive you. Much treachery has made me habitually cautious—perhaps distrustful."

"You are in the right to be so," replied the Mask. "Caution becomes your years and character. Yet, methinks, the science you profess should enable you to discover a friend from an enemy."

"I read not men's looks beneath a vizard, my son," replied Ruggieri; "that were, indeed, to see through a glass darkly. Who, blindfold, could consult the stars! Give me to behold your features, and I will tell you whether or not you are what you represent yourself."

"You wrong me by your doubts, father," replied the Mask—"I repeat, I am a friend—that I am well known to you, you shall have ample assurance presently; and that I have some claim to the service I am about to re-

quire at your hands, you will, then, I doubt not, admit. Meantime, as secrecy is my object, and as the disclosure of my features, or even of my name, would only be attended with risk, you will, perhaps, suffer me to preserve my incognito."

"Assuredly, my son," replied Ruggieri, who had now regained his confidence, "I have no desire to penetrate your mystery. Were it an object with me, I could readily gain information. He must walk closely masked who would elude the scrutiny of Cosmo Ruggieri. But to the point, this youth"—(for Ruggieri had hastily arranged the disordered attire of the Venetian damsel) "claims my attention—what do you require of me?"

"Before we proceed," returned the Mask, "I pray you, father, to accept this purse as an earnest of my sincerity: it will give you a clearer insight to my character than even the display of my physiognomy might do." Saying which he thrust a well-lined purse into the hands of the Astrologer, who received it, nothing reluctant.

"You have said well, my son," returned he—"this is a medium, through which I clearly distinguish the false from the true friend. The countenance may beguile, but there is nothing simulate in this," continued he, telling the broad pieces in his hand, while he resigned his burthen to the dwarf Elberich. "How can I assist you? Whatsoever comes within the scope of my art is yours to command."

"In a word, then," returned the Mask, "I love—"

"Ah! I understand," replied Ruggieri, significantly, "you love without requital."

"You have said it, father."

"And would subdue the heart of her for whom you sigh. Is it not so, my son?"

"Even so, father."

"Doubt not its accomplishment. Be she chilly as Caucasean snow, I will engage to create a flame within her bosom shall burn with an ardour fiercer than that created by the cestus of Venus."

"Swear to me, father, you will do this."

"By Orimasis! she shall be yours."

"Enough—I am content."

"Give me the damsel's name, her dwelling—?"

"Neither are needed—she is here." And the Mask pointed to the Gelosa.

"Jabamiah!" exclaimed the surprised Astrologer—"this youth—this—"

"Nay, I know all," replied the Mask.—"Plead not ignorance.—I witnessed the discovery you made."

"And—and you love her ——."

"Love her!" echoed the Mask—"Hear me, father," continued he with impetuosity. "You, who are of that fiery land, need not be told with what fierceness we Italians love.—With all the ardour of overwhelming passion I pursued this damsel. She was deaf to my prayers, my vows, entreaties. In vain I used every blandishment, every artifice—in vain lavished gifts upon her that might have won a princess. All my efforts were ineffectual. For me she had no heart, no smile, no love. Nay, more, the fury of my suit affrighted her.

Indifference grew to fear, and fear to hate.—She hated me. Hate, in some bosoms, is akin to love, but not in hers. It was (shall I confess so much?) a loathing of me. She repelled all my advances, avoided my presence, fled my sight. Stung by resentment, urged on by disappointed passion, I formed plans that, had they not been foiled in their execution, must have placed her within my power. By some means she became acquainted with my projects, and sought safety in flight. Her disappearance added to my torture—I was frantic. While plunged in this despair, I received intelligence that she had flown to Paris. Thither I repaired—traced her—saw through her disguise—attended her performances at the Hôtel de Bourbon—hovered round her dwelling—haunted her like her shadow, in the hope that chance would, in the end, befriend me; it *has* befriended me when least expected.—The moment has arrived.—She has fallen into your power. No further obstacle exists.—She is *mine*."

And the Mask would have seized upon the inanimate girl, had he not been withheld by the Astrologer.

"One obstacle yet exists, my son," said Ruggieri, coldly. "You have a rival."

"A rival!" echoed the Mask.

"A formidable one."

"Name him!"

"For whom did she wreath that garland?—For whom endanger her life?"

"Ha!"

"For Crichton!"—

"Perdition seize him! That *she* loves *him* is clear. But he loves her not—knows her not—nor shall he know her—they must meet no more. We lose time, father; yield me that maid."

"Take back your purse, monsignore," replied Ruggieri, firmly; "I cannot aid you in this matter."

"How?" exclaimed the Mask—"Have I not your oath?"

"True; but I knew not what I swore."

"'Tis binding nevertheless. That is, if

aught be binding on a conscience supple as your own. What interest can *you* have in this maiden? Are your services already purchased by this accursed Crichton? or do you hope to make a better market with him?"

"Put no further affront upon me, Signor Maschera," returned Ruggieri. "I am not lightly aroused nor easily appeased, as you may learn, if you provoke my anger. I am no friend to Crichton: nor is this maiden aught to me. Beyond the accidental discovery of her sex, and what you yourself have told me, I am wholly ignorant in all relating to her:—but fate has given her to my protection, and to violence like yours I will never betray her. Shame to the grey hairs that deck my brows did I act otherwise. Take back your purse, Signor, and trouble me no longer."

"Away, thou hoary hypocrite," exclaimed the Mask. "Think not to impose upon one, who knows thee well as I do, by thy vile pretences. Why should I stoop to solicit when I can command? A word from me—a

look—a signal, and thou art plunged within a dungeon—stretched upon a wheel, whence not even Catherine's powerful arm can accomplish thy deliverance. Of all men living, Ruggieri, thou hast most cause of dread from *me;* of all agents of iniquity, I have most need of *thee*, therefore thou art safe; but tremble if thou disobeyest me. My vengeance is swifter and more certain than thine own."

"Who, in the devil's name, are you that talk thus?" enquired the Astrologer.

"Were I the devil himself, I could not occasion you more disquietude than I should were I to reveal myself," replied the Mask. "Be satisfied, and seek to know no further of me."

The haughty imperiousness of tone suddenly assumed by the Mask, was not without its effect upon the Astrologer. He struggled, however, to maintain a composed demeanour.

"What if I still refuse compliance?" demanded he.

"I denounce you," continued the Mask, breathing the words hollowly in his ear, "of

treasonable practices against the Monarch 'neath whose rule you live. Search the foul and inky depths of your soul, Ruggieri, and pluck forth its blackest secret. Bethink you of the proofs that might exist of your damnable offences, and of him who might become your accuser."

"There lives but one who could thus accuse me," groaned Ruggieri, "and he—"

"Stands by your side."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ruggieri, incredulously.

The Mask whispered in his ear. The Astrologer started and trembled from head to foot.

"I am content," said he, after a pause. "Command me, noble Signor, as you see fitting. My life is at your disposal."

"I need not the sacrifice," returned the Mask, scornfully. "Deliver up the maiden. Yet stay, I am not unattended here. Hast thou no place of refuge, to which thou couldst convey this maid, where she might benefit by

thy leach-like craft, would be secure from all observation of this Crichton, and where thou mightest put in practice the magical allurements of which thou hast made mention?"

"Signor, I have," replied Ruggieri, after an instant's reflection, and as if struck with a new idea, "if it be your pleasure, I will convey her to the mystic tower, nigh the Hôtel de Soissons, whither alone her Majesty Catherine de Medicis and I have access. There shall she remain concealed, till I am acquainted with your further wishes.—But, can it be, that this damsel hath refused your suit? Methinks she might have esteemed herself too highly honoured by your notice. By Orimasis there must be witchcraft in the case. You may be spell-bound, monsignore. The Emperor Charlemagne was similarly enslaved to a foul hag—and now I mind me of a strangely fashioned key, which I discovered upon her bosom. Perchance the charm resides in that. It may be a talisman of potent virtue. I will put it to the proof;

in any case we must have a counter-enchantment, and I will substitute in its stead, a waxen image of your—"

"As thou wilt," interrupted the Mask, "be that *thy* business. Ha! she stirs—quick, we lose time."

For some moments before it was remarked by the Astrologer and his companion, the return of animation had been perceptible in the Gelosa. Heaving a deep sigh, she opened the lids of her large and languid eyes, and fixed their black orbs upon Ruggieri and Elberich; the former of whom was bending over her, at the instant of her restoration to consciousness, (if the bewilderment she felt could be called consciousness,) while the latter sustained her within his caitiff grasp. In this crouching posture, with his unbared, yellow arms twined around her person, the hideous dwarf resembled a messenger of Eblis sent to bear some beautiful soul to perdition. Fear took possession of the maiden as she glanced from one to the other. The objects before her looked like the visions of a dream. Ruggieri in

vain raised his finger to his lips. She neither comprehended her own situation, nor perceived necessity for silence. Just then her wandering gaze chanced upon the Mask, whose dusky form, supported by the buttress of the wall, and dilated by the gathering shadows of twilight, appeared almost gigantic. With a wild laugh, she pointed to the gloomy figure and muttered some incoherent ejaculations.

"Away!" exclaimed the Mask, "about it quick; why listen to her ravings? Remove her to the turret."

"That voice!" shrieked the maiden, starting to her feet, and spreading her hand before her eyes, "It *is* — it *must* be he!— where am I?—ha—!"

"Seize her," vociferated the Mask.

"He haunts me even while life is ebbing," screamed the distracted girl; "I am dying, yet cannot 'scape him. Save me from him, Crichton—save me!"

And with a wild scream she broke from the grasp of Ruggieri.

"Gone!" shouted the Mask, ineffectually

endeavouring to arrest her flight. "Miscreants! you have let the snared bird loose. Ruggieri, you shall answer this with your life."

"The bird hath only fluttered forth," returned the Astrologer—"We yet may make it ours."

It was at this crisis that the voice of the Gelosa reached the ears of Crichton. Like a frail bark tossed amidst troubled waters, the enfeebled maid strove against the tumultuous mob, who little heeded either her plaints or frantic ejaculations.

"Poor youth!" cried one of the Scholars. —"his hurt hath turned his brain:—get hence, foolish boy! Crichton hath his hands too full to give attention to thy shouts. He hath more need of help than thou hast. Dost see yon tall green plume?—Dost see the strife around it?—That plume is Crichton's. Be advised, and venture not where blows shower thick as hail, and where thou may'st come in for thy share of the tempest. Seek shelter in the rear."

The maid discerned the lofty figure of Crichton, as indicated by the Student, involved amidst the throng; and at the same moment his eye alighted upon her struggling form. "It *is* the voice of the Gelosa," he mentally ejaculated. "How comes he there unattended? To the rescue!—Ha!—Back, sirs, on your lives, I charge you."

"Save me, Crichton!" screamed the Mantuan, "save me!"

A thick battalion of Scholars opposed themselves to Crichton's progress.

"Stand aside!" vociferated he, nothing daunted by their numbers; and, whirling the iron bar over his head, he dashed in the direction of the Gelosa.

The damsel beheld him approach—she saw the Scholars give way before his resistless efforts—she heard his shout of encouragement—and at the very instant when her bosom throbbed highest with hope, and when she almost deemed herself secure beneath his protecting arm, she felt her waist encircled by a sudden clasp.

She looked up—her eyes encountered two dark orbs flashing from the outlets of a sable mask. Her brain reeled;—she saw no more.

Crichton meanwhile pressed fiercely forward. Fresh difficulties were thrown in his path—fresh ranks obstinately opposed themselves to his progress; but all difficulties were at length overcome, and he reached the spot where he beheld the Gelosa:—it was void. A roar of mockery from the Students testified their satisfaction at his disappointment.

"You have arrived too late to succour your preserver," shouted a voice from out the crowd; — "he is beyond your reach, and in the care of one who will not readily surrender him. Higados de Dios! You are foiled, most puissant Caballero, nor shall it be *my* fault if you do not find ever a stumbling-block within your path. Bezo los manos, Señor."

Turning towards the quarter whence the

voice proceeded, Crichton beheld the retreating figure of Caravaja.

"By my hopes of knightly worship," murmured he, as he glanced fiercely round, "I would give all the laurels I have this day won to have effected that poor youth's deliverance from his foes. 'Tis plain from his cries, his looks of terror, and his sudden disappearance, that he hath been placed in fearful jeopardy. Curses upon these brawling Scholars! 'Twere a labour of Hercules to pursue the quest amidst a scene of such confusion; and yet I would fain continue it did I see a chance of success. Why did Ruggieri, who so eagerly accepted the charge of this wounded boy, suffer him to incur such peril? The old Astrologer shall render me some explanation of his want of caution, or humanity."

Crichton's further self-communion was cut short by the shouts of the archers and the trampling of their steeds. After a brief but ineffectual resistance, as we have before

stated, the Scholars threw down their arms, and, shouting for quarter, fled amain. Crichton was left alone. No sooner did the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who was careering among the crowd, ever and anon seizing a prisoner and delivering him to the custody of the guard, discern him, than he reined in his charger by his side.

"Now heaven and our Lady be praised," exclaimed the Vicomte gaily, "that I find you unhurt, mon cher Crichton. By my blazon, it had, indeed, been a blot upon the fair page of chivalry had its brighest mirror perished amid a rascal rout like this. Not a scratch but should have been paid for by a life. Vive-Dieu! if the Rector reprove not his froward children, our sergeants shall take the task from his hands, and give him a lesson in the art. But see, your page is at hand; your courser snorteth for very joy to behold his lord. Ah, Crichton! brave steed —fair page—both pledges of a royal lady's favour;—you are twice fortunate!"

"Thrice fortunate, Joyeuse, in a brother-in-

arms who flieth to my rescue in extremities like the present," returned Crichton, in the same lively tone as his companion, vaulting at the same time into the saddle of a superb charger in richest housings, which was led towards him by a gallant-looking page, mounted upon a milk-white palfrey, and bedecked in doublet of white satin and velvet mantle of deepest azure, the colours, as before remarked, of Marguerite de Valois.—"Methinks," added he, smiling, "this hard-fought field is at length our own—and yet, after enacting more wonders than ever were achieved by the doughtiest champions of Romance—Tristan or Launfal, Huon or Parthenopex, when struggling 'gainst the powers of sorcelrie and darkness—it moveth me to tears to think in what light esteem my exploits will be held by preux chevaliers like thyself, who think there is no honour to be won in such perilous conflicts. Trust me a legion of swarthy gnomes, with the fay Urganda at their head, were more easily vanquished than these disloyal varlets. I have now encountered this

University alike in hall and field, disputed it with them by rule of rhetoric and rule of fence, and will freely admit that I prefer the weapons of the principals to those of their disciples, and plume myself rather upon my conquest (if conquest it be) over these hard-headed, club-wielding Neophytes, whose stubborn brains were more difficult of convincement, than their renowned and learned seniors. But 'tis time to bestow a thought upon my luckless countryman, the original cause of all this scene of discord. Methinks I discern him and his stanch ally, amid the thickest turmoil. Forward, Joyeuse, I would speak with them."

A few bounds of his steed brought Crichton to the spot where Ogilvy and Blount were standing. Perceiving that the fray was at an end, the latter called off his dog from the Bernardin; but finding that his intimation was not attended to by the stubborn animal, he seconded the hint with a heavy blow of his crab-stick, which produced the desired effect.

Druid quitted his hold, and with a surly growl plumped down at his master's feet.

"We meet to-morrow, then, Jasper," said Crichton, "and such service as I can render shall be yours to command. Meantime you shall suffer no further molestation. Joyeuse, hath he your safeguard?"

"He has," replied the Vicomte. "By my halidom the brave Scot shall have a post amongst my company of archers, if he choose to barter his gown of grey serge for a corslet of bright steel. He will not be the first of his countrymen who hath found the change to his advantage."

"I will reflect upon your offer, Monseigneur," replied Ogilvy, with the characteristic caution of his nation—"meantime my best thanks are due to you for the proposal."

"As you please, maître," replied Joyeuse haughtily; "nor are your acknowledgments due to *me*, but to the Seigneur Crichton. To him, alone, you are indebted for my offer."

"He knows not what he declines, Joyeuse,"

returned Crichton.—"I will reason with him on the morrow. And now," continued he, "I would desire better acquaintance with your valiant comrade, who, from his frame, his accent, and his dog, I judge to be of England."

"I am an Englishman," returned Blount. "But I deserve not the epithet you have applied to me. Had you bestowed it on my dog the term might not have been misapplied — on me 'tis wholly thrown away. Druid hath some pretensions to valour—he will never disgrace the soil from which he sprung—nor will his master, for that matter. Since, however, you have honoured me with your notice, worthy sir, let us join hands upon our new-struck friendship, if I be not too bold in assuming such a feeling on your part towards me, and you shall find, if you need them, that in Simon Blount and his dog, for I must not except Druid, who is part of myself, and indeed the best part, you will have two followers upon whose faith

you may rely. *Audaciter et fideliter* is my device."

"And a cordial and constant one it is," replied Crichton, as he warmly returned the pressure of the Englishman's huge outstretched hand. "Gladly do I embrace your offer. Come to my hotel with Ogilvy on the morrow, and neglect not to bring with you my new and trusty follower."

"Doubt not that," returned Blount; "Druid and I are seldom separated."

Further conversation was interrupted by the sudden arrival of Chicot, who, contrary to his wont, had an expression somewhat serious upon his scoffing and derisive physiognomy.

"Ah! my gay gossip," said Crichton, "why that portentous look? hast thou lost thy bauble in the fray?"

"Far worse than that, brother droll," returned Chicot, "I have lost my reputation. Thou hast fairly won my cap and bells, and shall have them by pre-eminence of wisdom.

But bend down thy lordly neck to me. I have somewhat for thy private hearing."

And approaching Crichton, the Jester imparted his information in a low tone.

"What!" exclaimed Crichton, who appeared struck with surprise at Chicot's intelligence—"art sure this Geloso is——— ?"

"Hush!" muttered the Jester; "who is now the fool? Would you betray her secret?"

"And it was the Mask who seized her?" asked Crichton in a whisper. "Whose features doth that vizard hide?"

"I know not," replied Chicot—"it may be the Balafré, or the Béarnais, or Antichrist, for aught I can tell. But this I may assert, that it is neither my gossip Henriot, nor thou, nor I, nor even the Seigneur Joyeuse. I will not say as much for our regal ghoul Catherine, whom perchance it *may* be."

"But Ruggieri, thou sayest—"

"Was with him. I beheld him and his dwarf Elberich. Both lent assistance to the ravisher."

"Devils! This cursed Astrologer shall—"

"Have a care, gossip. Ruggieri is a loose friend — but a fast foe. Beware of him. We never hob-a-nob together without my glass breaking, and the wine being spilt—a-hem!"

"He is gone, thou sayest?"

"Of a surety."

"I will seek him in his tower, and compel him to some explanation of this mystery of the Mask and maiden."

"That tower is the kennel of the she-wolf Catherine, — take heed what you do. Many a hand has been thrust into a cage, the bearer whereof, would have gladly withdrawn it unscathed. But as you will. Fools are leaders—wise men receders."

"Messeigneurs, adieu!" said Crichton; "remember our appointment of the morrow. Joyeuse, our rendezvous is at the masque at the Louvre to-night.— Au revoir!"

Saying which Crichton plunged his spurs into his horse's sides, and followed by his

page, rode swiftly down the Montagne Saint-Généviève.

Chicot shrugged his shoulders.

"Knight-errantry is not wholly extinct, I perceive," muttered he; "our gossip, Crichton, is born at least some half century too late. He should have flourished in the good old times of mine ancestor Triboulet, and his chivalrous master François I. He is caught at once by the silken meshes of this dark hair'd syren. What will our fair mistress Margot say if this new adventure reach her jealous ears?—But I must to the Louvre. This scholastic brawl will divert Henri's spleen. And as I descend this Parnassian steep of Saint Généviève, to beguile the time, I'll invoke the Muse in behalf of

The Admirable Scot.

A SONG I'll write on
Matchless Crichton;
In wit a bright one,
Form, a slight one,
Love, a light one!

Who talketh Greek with us
Like great Busbequius,
Knoweth the Cabala,
Well as Mirandola,
Fate can reveal to us,
Like wise Cornelius;
Reasoneth like Socrates,
Or old Xenocrates;
Whose system ethical,
Sound, dialectical,
Aristotelian,
Pantagruelian,
Like to chameleon,
Choppeth and changeth,
Every-where rangeth!
Who rides like Centaur,
Preacheth like Mentor,
Drinks like Lyæus,
Sings like Tyrtæus,
Reads like Budæus,
Vaulteth like Tuccaro,
Painteth like Zucchero,
Diceth like Spaniard,
Danceth like galliard,
Tilts like Orlando,
Does all man can do!
Qui pupas nobiles
Innumerabiles,
Amat amabiles;
Atque Reginam
Navarræ divinam!
Whose rare prosperity,

Grace and dexterity,
Courage, temerity,
Shall, for a verity,
Puzzle posterity!

"Ough—ough—" gasped the Jester, "I am fairly out of breath. As old Marot sings, *en rimant bien souvent je m'enrime.*"

END OF THE FIRST DAY.

THE FIRST NIGHT.

February IV.

1579.

L'age affoiblit mon discours
Et cette fougue me quitte,
Dont je chantois les Amours
De la Reine Marguerite.

LE PRESIDENT MAYNARD.
Ode à Flotte.

THE FIRST NIGHT.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MASQUE.

Les peuples pipés de leur mine,
Les voyant ainsi s'enfermer,
Jugeoint qu'ils parloient de s'armer
Pour conquérir la Palestine.
Et toutesfois leur enterprise
Etoit le parfum d'un collet;
Le point coupé d'une chemise
Et la figure d'un ballet.
De leur mollesse lethargique,
Le discord sortant des enfers,
Des maux que nous avons souffers
Nous ourdit la toile tragique.

MALHERBE.

THAT night, high festival was held within the Louvre, by its effeminate and voluptuous sovereign, who assembled upon the occasion the whole of his brilliant court, then without

a rival in Europe, either for the number and loveliness of the dames who frequented it, or for the bravery and gallantry of the youthful chivalry, by which it was graced. To Henri Trois the lighter amusements of the revel, the ballet, and the masque, were as captivating as the more manly sports of tennis and the chace were to his brother, and predecessor, Charles Neuf, of execrable memory. His fêtes were sumptuous and frequent—so frequent, indeed, that the chief part of his time was occupied in the arrangement of these magnificent spectacles. The sums lavished upon the marriage-feasts of his favourites, were enormous. The royal coffers were often drained by his inordinate extravagance; and, while the state groaned beneath the weight of the burthens constantly imposed upon it, the unbridled licence that reigned at his orgies, occasioned scandal and discontent throughout the reputable portion of the community, of which his enemies were not slow to take advantage.

Two years before the period of which we

treat, Henri gave an entertainment to his brother, the Duc D'Anjou, at which the ladies assisted, "*vestues de verd, en habits d'homme, à moitiè nuës, et ayant leurs cheveux épars comme épousées.*"* The cost of this banquet exceeded a hundred thousand francs! In December, 1576, as we learn from the Journal of his reign, he went, *en masque,* to the Hôtel de Guise, accompanied by thirty princesses and ladies of his court, richly attired in silks, and silver tissue, braided with pearls and gems of price; and such was the confusion that prevailed, that the more discreet part (*le plus sages Dames et Demoiselles*) were obliged to retire, by reason of the licence of the maskers; for, as it is significantly observed, by Pierre de L'Estoile, the author of the Journal, "could the walls and tapestry have spoken, they would have, doubtless, found many agreeable particulars to communicate." Subsequently, in 1583, upon Shrove Tuesday, attended by his favourites, masked like himself, Henri rushed into the

* Journal de Henri III—Mai, 1577.

streets, where he committed such frantic, and unheard-of follies, and insolences, that he was publicly reprimanded the next day by all the preachers in Paris.

Louise de Lorraine, or de Vaudemont, his queen, a princess of amiable but feeble character, entirely without ambition, (on which account she was selected as a suitable spouse to her son by the crafty Catherine de Medicis, ever apprehensive of a rival near the throne), and possessing the negative merit of passive submission, offered no opposition to the wishes of her royal husband, though she took little part in his festivities. Her gentle existence was divided between her oratory, her garden, the establishment of *confréries*, and other religious institutions, and the retirement of a secluded apartment; her daily occupations were embroidery, or the perusal of her book of prayer; her attire was of the simplest material, fashioned chiefly of woollen cloth; and, though her complexion had become deathly pale, she refused the aid of rouge. Her immediate attendants, and ladies of honour,

were recommended to her regard, rather by their piety and decorum of conduct, than for any other more dazzling qualifications. Of this queen, many pleasing traits are narrated—one, in particular, of a reproof conveyed to the flaunting, and over-dressed lady of a president, to whom, in the unpretending garb she had adopted, she was wholly unknown. But taken altogether, her nature was too easy, and acquiescent, and her frame of mind too infirm, to promote in any way the welfare of the kingdom, or to accomplish the reformation of the monarch to whom she was united. That she found rather sorrow than happiness in her exalted station, can scarcely be doubted. Indeed her woes have been thus embalmed in verse, by the Jesuit Le Moine:—

> Son esprit fut gêné dans la couche royale;
> La couronne lui fut une châine fatale,
> Le Louvre une prison, le trône un echafaut,
> Erigé pour montrer son tourment de plus haut.

But, perhaps, the severest of her afflictions consisted in her being denied the blessing of children.

The position which Louise de Vaudemont should have occupied, was assumed by the Queen Mother, who amply supplied whatever might be wanting in her daughter-in-law. In her hands, her sons were mere puppets. They filled the thrones, while she wielded their sceptres. Hers was truly, what it has been described, "a soul of bronze, or of iron." Subtle, secret, Machiavelian—the "Prince" of the plotting Florentine was her constant study — her policy worked in the dark; none could detect her movements till they were disclosed by their results. Inheriting many of the nobler qualities of the Medicis, her hatred was as implacable as that of the Borgias; and, like that dread race, her schemes were not suffered to be restrained by any ties of affinity. Rumour attributed to her agency the mysterious removal of her two elder sons* from the path of the third, who

* See what Thuanus says, upon the *post mortem* examination of Charles IX. lib. lvii. *ex causâ incognitâ reperti livores.* The death-bed of Charles was, indeed, an awful one; but its horror would be increased, could we be assured that his excruciating pangs were occasioned by his mother.

was unquestionably her favourite; and she was afterwards accused of being accessory to the sudden death of another, the Duc D'Anjou, who perished at Chateau-Thierry, from smelling a bouquet of poisoned flowers.

The court of Catherine de Medicis, in effect that of her son, numbered three hundred of the loveliest and most illustrious damsels of the land, a list of whom will be found in the pages of Brantôme, who falls into raptures in describing the charms of this galaxy of beauties, proclaiming them to be little short of goddesses, and declaring that the palace which they enlightened was *un vray paradis du monde, escole de toute honnesteté et vertu et ornement de la France.* Now, however we may differ from the vivacious Chronicler of the "*Dames Galantes*" in our estimate of the "*honnesteté et vertu*" of the ladies in question, we are quite satisfied, that his enthusiastic admiration was fully warranted by their personal attractions. In later times the sparkling court of our own Charles the Second did

not boast so much beauty as that of Henri Trois.

Surrounded by this fair phalanx, Catherine felt herself irresistible. An accurate judge of human nature, she knew that the most inflexible bosom was no proof against female blandishment, and, armed with this "*petite bande des dames de la cour*," as they were called, she made use of their agency to counteract the plans of her enemies, and by their unsuspected influence, which extended over all the court, became acquainted with the most guarded secrets of all parties.

The profound dissimulation which enveloped her conduct has left the character of Catherine a problem which the historian would in vain attempt to solve; and equally futile would be his endeavours to trace to their hidden sources the springs of all her actions. Blindly superstitious, bigoted, yet sceptical, and, if her enemies are at all to be believed, addicted to the idolatrous worship of false Gods; proud, yet never guilty of meanness;

a fond wife—an Italian woman, yet exhibiting no jealousy of an inconstant husband; a tender mother, yet accused of sacrificing three of her sons to her ambitious views; a rigid observer of etiquette, yet not unfrequently over-looking its neglect; fiery and vindictive, yet never roused to betray her emotions by any gesture of impatience, but veiling her indignation under a mask of calmness, her supposititious character and actions were a perpetual contradiction to each other. The best description of her is, perhaps, contained in the following satirical epitaph which appeared soon after her demise:—

La Reine qui cy gît fut un diable et un ange,
Toute pleine de blâme, et pleine de louange,
Elle soutint l'Etat et l'Etat mit à bas,
Elle fit maints accords, et pas mains de debats,
Elle enfanta trois Rois, et trois guerres civiles,
Fit bâtir des Chateaux, et ruiner des villes;
Fit bien de bonnes loix, et de mauvais edits,
Souhaite-lui, passant, Enfer et Paradis.

Catherine's, however, was a genius of a high order. No portion of her time was left unoccupied. She was a lover of letters, and of men of letters—

Pour ne dégénerer de ses premiers ayeux
Soigneuse a fait chercher les livres les plus vieux
Hebreux, Grecs, et Latins, traduits et à traduire—*

a cultivator of the arts, and the most perfect horsewoman of her time. To her the ladies are indebted for the introduction of the pommel in the saddle, (female equitation being, up to that period, conducted *à la planchette*,) a mode which, according to Brantôme, she introduced for the better display of her unequalled symmetry of person.

If Catherine was a paradox, not less so was her son Henri Trois, whose youth held forth a brilliant promise not destined to be realised in his riper years. The victor of Jarnac and Montcontour—the envy of the warlike youth of his time—the idol of those whose swords had been fleshed in many battles—the chosen monarch of Poland—a well-judging statesman—a fluent and felicitous orator, endowed with courage, natural grace, a fine person, universally accomplished in all the exercises of the tilting-yard, the manège, and the hall-of-arms

* Ronsard.

—this chivalrous and courageous prince, as soon as he ascended the throne of France, sank into voluptuous lethargy, from which, except upon extraordinary occasions, he was never afterwards aroused: his powers of mind —his resolution—his courage, moral and physical, faded beneath the enervating life of sensuality in which he indulged.

Governed by his mother and by his favourites, who were Catherine's chief opponents, and of whose over-weening influence she stood most in fear; threatened by the Duc de Guise, who scarcely deigned to conceal his bold designs upon the throne; distrusted by the Members of the League, of which he had named himself chief, and who were, for the most part, instruments of the Guise; dreaded by the Huguenots, to whom he had always shown himself a relentless persecutor, and who remembered with horror his cruelties at the massacre of Saint-Barthélemi, of which dismal tragedy he had avowed himself a principal instigator—opposed by the Pope, and by Philip II. of Spain (his brother-

in-law), both of whom were favourable to the claims of Guise—with Henri of Navarre in the field, and his brother the Duc D'Anjou disaffected; fulminated against by the Sorbonne; assailed by one of its doctors, in a pamphlet, endeavouring to prove the necessity of his deposition—Henri, with his crown tottering upon his head, still maintained an exterior of the same easy indifference, abandoned none of his pleasures, or his devotions, (for devotion with him took the semblance of amusement—and the oratory and the ball-room were but a step asunder—the mass and the masquerade each the diversion of an hour)—turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of his counsellors, and could only be awakened like the Assyrian, from his luxurious trance, when the armed hand was put forth to grasp his sceptre. Then, indeed, for a brief space he showed himself a king.

It is not, however, with this portion of his reign we have to do, but with that in which feet twinkled in the varied elastic movements of the figure—now attuned to the rapid whirl

this Sybaritic prince was altogether sunk in indolence and dreamy enjoyment.

On the night of which we speak, he had gathered together within the gorgeous halls of the Louvre, the loveliest and the proudest of his capital. Catherine de Medicis was there with her brilliant bevy of beauties. Marguerite de Valois, the fair Queen of Navarre, then in her seven-and-twentieth summer, and glowing in the noon-tide warmth of her resplendent charms, was present, attended by her train; nor was the gentle Louise de Vaudemont, and her demure and discreet dames of honour absent. All that Henri's court could boast, of grace, wit, youth, beauty, or distinction, were assembled. Nothing was wanting to render the fête in every respect attractive.

Perfumes exhaled from a thousand aromatic lamps, or fragrant exotics filled the air with sweets; music, soft and low, breathed from a band of unseen minstrels, echoed to the steps of the dancers; lofty plumes waved to the cadences of the melody; small elastic of the bransle—now to the graceful and ma-

jestic pauses of the Spanish pavanne, or to the grave, slow, and dignified deportment of the Italian pazzameno.

The fête was a masked one, and all, save the monarch and a few of his privileged followers, wore the vizard. The costumes, endless and diversified, were chosen rather with a view to display the person of the wearer to the best advantage in a guise different from his ordinary one, than with that bizarre taste which characterises an Italian masquerade or carnival scene. Bright eyes, not less bright that they were seen peeping like stars through the dusky loop-holes of the pretty velvet mask called the *touret de nez*, which gave additional piquancy and effect, where none was needed, to the ruby lips and polished chin of the wearer, rained their influence around. Of all favourers to flirtation, commend us to the mask. Beneath its shadow a thousand random darts may be shot that would fall pointless, or never be aimed at all, were it not for this friendly covering. Blessings, therefore, upon him that invented the mask,

who has thereby furnished the bashful lover with a remedy for his grievance!

But to return. The splendid company dispersed themselves throughout the long suite of gilded salons—now listening to the ravishing notes of a concert of harmonious voices; or gathering round the tables where vast sums were lost at trictrac, primero and other forgotten games of hazard; or pausing beneath a scented arcade of flowers; or loitering within the deep embrasure of a tapestried window; or partaking of the sumptuous banquet set forth within the great hall of the Cariatides. The laugh and the jest were loud and high: the love-speech and its response faint and low.

Amid the glittering throng might be discerned a group, who had laid aside their masks, and who held themselves slightly aloof from the proceedings of the assemblage. More mirth, however, might be observed amongst this party than elsewhere. Their laughter was heard above the conversation; and few were there, whether dames or seigneurs, who passed in review

before them, if their gait or features could be detected, but were exposed to a galling fire of raillery and sarcastic remarks.

One amongst their number was treated with marked deference and respect by the others; and it would appear that it was for his amusement that all these witticisms were uttered, as, whenever a successful *hit* was made, he bestowed upon it his applause. He was a man of middle height, slender figure, and had a slight stoop in the shoulders. His countenance was charged with an undefinable and sinister expression, something between a sneer and a smile. His features were not handsome; the nose being heavy and clubbed, and the lips coarse and thick. But his complexion was remarkable for its delicacy and freshness of tint; neither were his eyes deficient in lustre, though their glances were shifting, suspicious, and equivocal. He wore short moustaches curled upwards from the lips, and a beard *à la royale* tufted his chin. From either ear depended long pearl drops, adding to his effeminate appearance, while in

lieu of plumes, his black toquet, placed upon the summit of his head, and so adjusted as not to disturb the arrangement of his well-curled hair, was adorned with a brilliant aigrette of many-coloured gems. Around his neck he wore a superb necklace of pearls, together with a chain of medallions intermingled with ciphers, from which was suspended the lesser order of the Saint-Esprit radiant with diamonds of inestimable value. In fact, the jewels flaming from his belt, the buckles, and the various fastenings of his magnificent attire, were almost beyond computation. On the one hand, this girdle sustained a pouch filled with small silver flacons of perfume, together with a sword with rich hilt and velvet scabbard, and on the other, a chaplet of death's heads, which, ever mindful of a vow to that effect, he constantly carried about his person, and which indicated the strange mixture of religion or hypocrisy, that, together with depravity, went to the composition of the wearer's character. Adorned with the grand order of the Saint-Esprit, and

edged with silver lace, his chesnut-coloured velvet mantle, cut in the extremity of the mode, was a full inch shorter than that of his companions. His ruff was of ampler circumference, and enjoyed the happiest and most becoming *don de la rotonde*. Fitting as close to the figure as loops and buttons could make it, his exquisitely worked and slashed pourpoint sat to a miracle, nor less studied was the appointment of the balloon-like hauts de chausses, swelling over his reins, and which, together with the doublet, were of yellow satin. Far be it from us to attempt to portray the exuberant splendour of his sleeve; the nice investiture of the graceful limb, with the hose of amaranthine silk, or the sharp point of the satin shoe. No part of his attire was left unstudied, and the *élégant* of the nineteenth century may aspire in vain to emulate the finished decorative taste of the royal requisite of the sixteenth.

Henri Trois, for it was the monarch whom we have endeavoured to describe, conferred, as before stated, infinite attention upon the

minutiæ of the toilet, and carried his consideration of dress somewhat to extremes. Upon the solemnization of his espousals with the Queen Louise, so much time was occupied in the arrangement of himself and his spouse for the ceremonial, that Mass could not be celebrated until five o'clock in the evening; and the *Te Deum* was in consequence neglected to be sung, an omission which was regarded as a most unfortunate augury. Of his personal appearance, moreover, he was excessively vain—and so anxious was he to preserve the delicacy and freshness of his complexion and the smoothness of his skin, that he always wore a mask, and gloves prepared with unguents and softening pastes, during the hours devoted to repose. Few ladies of his court could compete with him in the beauty and smallness of his hand—a personal grace which he inherited from his mother, and which was enjoyed in common with him by Marguerite de Valois.

Upon the present occasion he had withdrawn one glove, of silk, woven with silver

tissue, and pinked with satin, in colours white and incarnadine; and suffered his small and snowy fingers, loaded with sumptuous rings, to stray negligently through the luxuriant ears of a little lap-dog, sustained by the Jester Chicot, who stood at his side. Of dogs Henri was so passionately fond, that he generally drove out with a carriage full of the most beautiful of their species; and took possession of any others that pleased his fancy in the course of the ride. Of his forcible abduction of their favorites, loud complaints were made by the réligieuses, the convents being the best canine store-houses, in the days of this great "dog-fancier!" and frequently resorted to by him for fresh supplies.

Scarcely less splendidly equipped than their sovereign, were the courtiers stationed around him. Upon the right of Henri, who supported himself upon the shoulder of his chief valet, Du Halde, was placed the portly person of the Marquis de Villequier, surnamed "*le jeune et le gros*," though now laying little claim to the former epithet, near to whom was his son-

in-law, D'O., Superintendent of the Finance, occupied in the childish amusement of the bilboquet, then in vogue with all the courtiers, in consequence of their monarch's partiality for it. Even the gallant Joyeuse, and the stately D'Épernon disdained not to indulge in this frivolous pastime; and both of them carried long silver sarbacanes in their hands, with which, like the modern Italians at a Carnival, they occasionally pelted the maskers with confectionary and sugar-plumbs—displaying infinite adroitness in their aim.

Engaged in converse with D'Épernon was, François D'Épinay de Saint-Luc, Baron de Crevecœur, another of the favorites of Henri, and equally distinguished with his companions for a courage, which, in its wild and fierce display, amounted almost to ferocity. Saint-Luc was accounted the handsomest man of his time, and universally obtained the epithet of "*le beau*." Many pages and lacqueys, in the sumptuous liveries and emblazoned array of their lords, were in attendance.

"D'Arques," said the King, addressing

Joyeuse in a soft and melodious tone, "canst thou inform me whose lovely face lurks beneath yon violet mask (for lovely 'tis, or else the lips and throat belie it)—there, within the train of her majesty, my mother—thou seest whom I mean?"

"I do, Sire," replied Joyeuse; "and I quite concur in your Majesty's opinion, that the face must be divine, which that envious mask shrouds. The throat is superb, the figure that of a Venus. But as to the angelic owner, though I flatter myself I am sufficiently acquainted with the dames of her Majesty's suite, to offer a correct conjecture as to nine out of ten, let them be ever so carefully disguised, I own, I am puzzled by this fair incognita. Her gait is charming. Vive-Dieu! with your Majesty's permission, I will ascertain the point."

"Stay," said the King. "'Tis needless. Saint-Luc will resolve our doubts at once; 'twas she with whom he danced the Pavane. How name you your fair partner, Baron?"

"I am equally at a loss with yourself, Sire, as to her designation," replied Saint-Luc. "My efforts were in vain to obtain a glimpse of the features, and with the tones of the voice I was wholly unacquainted."

"Madame D'Épinay may well be jealous of her handsome husband," said the King, smiling (the Baroness, according to the memoirs of the time, was, "*bossue, laide et contrefaite, et encore pis,*" if worse can be well conceived); "but if thou, Saint-Luc, hast failed in making an impression upon the fair unknown, which of us shall hope to succeed? It cannot be (though the figure somewhat resembles her's) the Demoiselle de Chastaigneraye, or the fair La Bretesche (Villequier would be able to peer through any disguise she might assume), nor Surgéres, Ronsard's divinity, nor Torigni, nor La Rebours—Mort-dieu—not one of them is to compare with her; she floats in the dance, as if she moved on air.

"You appear interested, Sire," said Saint-Luc, smiling, to show his superb teeth. "Are

we to infer that the damsel may plume herself upon a royal conquest?"

"The damsel hath already made another conquest, upon which she has more reason to plume herself," interposed Chicot.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Saint-Luc, "Who may that be?"

"Nay, it refers not to thee, beau François," returned the Jester. "Thou, like our dear Henriot, art the victim of every passing glance; and neither of ye are a conquest upon which a maid might especially congratulate herself. Now he whose love she hath won, is one of whose homage a damsel *might* be proud."

"Ha!" exclaimed the King, "thou art in the secret, I perceive. Who is the damsel? and which of my gentlemen is her admirer?"

"All appear to be so, Sire," returned Chicot. "But were I to point out the most devoted of her admirers, I should indicate your Majesty's Jester; if the most audacious, Saint-Luc; if the most fickle, Joyeuse;

if the most grave, D'Épernon; if the most over-weening, D'O.; if the most bulky, Villequier; if the most imperious, your Majesty—"

"And the most successful, thou shouldst add"—interrupted Henri.

"No," replied Chicot. "In love affairs kings are never successful. They have no *bonnes fortunes*."

"Wherefore not?" asked Henri, smiling.

"Because their success is due not to themselves, but to their station," returned the Jester, "and is therefore wholly unworthy of the term. Can it be termed good fortune to obtain that which may not be refused?"

"My ancestor, the great Francis, found it otherwise," returned the King. "*He* at least was tolerably successful even in *thy* sense of the word."

"I doubt it," replied Chicot. "And so did *my* ancestor Triboulet. Poh! kings are always detected. Did *you* ever find it otherwise, Sire?"

"I shall not make thee my confessor,

compère," said Henri. "But what wouldst thou say were I to hazard the experiment in the case of yon fair unknown? What wager wilt thou hold that I do not succeed *en masque?*"

"Never throw away your best card, gossip," returned the Jester; "that were poor play indeed. "Approach her *en roi*, if you would be assured of triumph. Even *then* I have my doubts. But I will stake my sceptre against yours, that in the other case your Majesty is foiled."

"I may put it to the proof anon," replied the King, "I am not wont to be defeated. Meantime, I command thee to disclose all thou knowest concerning the damsel in question."

"All I know may be told in a breath, gossip."

"Her name?"

"Esclairmonde."

"A fair beginning. The name likes us well. Esclairmonde de—give me the surname?"

"Le Diable m'emporte! there I am at fault, Sire. She has no surname."

"Sang dieu! be serious, compère."

"By your father, the great Pantagruel—an oath I never ejaculate without due reverence—I swear to you, Sire, I *am* serious. The lovely Esclairmonde hath no patronymic. She hath little occasion to consult the herald for her escutcheon."

"How, sirrah! and one of the attendants on our mother?"

"Pardon, Sire. You require information. I am literal in my replies. There is a trifling mystery attached to her birth. Esclairmonde is an orphan—a Huguenot."

"A Huguenot!" exclaimed the King, with an expression of disgust, and hastily crossing himself. "By the holy Eucharist, thou must be in error."

"The *daughter* of a Huguenot, I should have said," returned Chicot. "Par la Sainte-Cornemeuse! no one would look for heretics in the train of her most Catholic Majesty, Catherine de Medicis. They would

flee from her as the fiend from holy water. John Calvin hath few disciples within the Louvre."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the Monarch, fervently grasping his chaplet of mort-heads. "'Tis strange," added he, after a moment's pause, "that I have never before heard of this girl or of her story. Art sure thou art not amusing us with some silly fable?"

"Does Madame Catherine trust you with all her secrets, gossip?" demanded Chicot.

"I trow not. Attend to me and you shall have the story of Esclairmonde, in the true vein of romance." And assuming a burlesque countenance of mock gravity, the Jester continued. "Immured within her chamber; carefully watched by her Majesty's attendants; —suffered to hold no intercourse with any of the palace—and above all no communion with any suspected of heresy—Esclairmonde, until within these few days, has led a life of entire seclusion. Whoever her father might be—and that he was of rank, and a veritable Huguenot, cannot methinks be doubted—he perished by

the edge of the sword at the day of Saint Barthélemi of blessed memory. While yet a child she was placed within the hands of your royal mother, by whom she hath been reared in the true Catholic and Apostolic faith, and in the manner I have related."

"Mort-Dieu! the tale is curious," replied the king; "and I now remember somewhat of the details thou hast given, though they had long since escaped my memory. I must see and converse with the fair Esclairmonde. Our mother hath not used us well in neglecting to present the damsel to us."

"Catherine de Medicis hath usually good reason for her actions, Sire, and I will answer for it in the present instance had the best of motives for her apparent neglect."

"Beshrew thy ribald tongue, sirrah," returned Henri, laughing; "I have yet, however, another question to put to thee. Have a care thou answerest it not lightly. Of what particular cavalier hath Esclairmonde made conquest? Of which of these gentlemen?

Take no heed of their glances. But reply without fear."

"I should not fear to speak, were it to any of them that I alluded," replied Chicot. "But it was not so. Let these gentlemen withdraw a few paces, and thou shalt learn thy rival's name."

At a gesture from the King the courtiers retired to a little distance.

"'Tis Crichton" said Chicot.

"Crichton!" echoed the King in surprise—"the peerless—the Admirable Crichton, as he hath this day been surnamed—who hath vanquished our University in close conflict—he were, indeed, a rival to be feared. But thou art wrong in naming him, gossip. Crichton is ensnared within the toils of our sister of Navarre, and she is as little likely to brook inconstancy as any dame within the land. I am safe, therefore, on that score. Besides, he hath no thought for other beauty. And, *apropos* of Crichton, it now occurs to me that I have not seen him to night. Will he not grace our festival? Our sister Marguerite lan-

guishes in his absence like a pining floweret, nor will she force a smile for Brantôme's sprightliest sally, or Ronsard's most fanciful rhapsody. What hath become of him?"

"I am wholly ignorant, Sire," replied the Jester. "He started at full speed from the College of Navarre after our affray with those disloyal scholars, several of whom, as I already informed your Majesty, are safely lodged within the Grand-Châtelet awaiting your disposal. What hath since befallen him I know not, save that he may by accident have thrust his hand into the hornet's nest."

"Thou speakest in riddles, compère," said the King gravely.

"Here cometh one shall read them for you, Sire," returned Chicot: "you will hear all from him."

"Ruggieri!" exclaimed the King. "Is it indeed our Astrologer, or hath some masker assumed his garb?"

"A circumstance not very likely," replied Chicot, "unless the wearer has a fancy to be poignarded by *accident*. By the awful shade

of Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus, I summon within your Majesty's presence the spirit and substance of Cosmo Ruggieri, Abbé of Saint-Mahé."

As Chicot concluded his invocation, the Astrologer advanced towards the King. His countenance was disturbed and anxious.

"What hath happened, father?" asked the Jester, surveying Ruggieri with a malignant grin. "Are the stars overcast—is the moon eclipsed — or hath a bearded comet risen in the heavens?—What prodigy hath occurred? Have thy philters failed—are thine images molten—or hast thou poisoned a friend by mistake?—Hath thy dwarf eloped with a succuba, or salamander—thy gold turned to withered leaves—thy jewels proved counterfeit —thy drugs lost their virtues?—By Trismegistus, what hath gone amiss?"

"Can I have an instant's speech with your Majesty?" said Ruggieri, with a profound obeisance, and disregarding the taunts of the jester. "What I have to say imports you much."

"Say on, then," replied the King.

Ruggieri looked at Chicot. Henri waved his hand, and the Jester reluctantly withdrew.

"I warrant me it is to speak of Crichton and the Gelosa, that the accursed old owl hath quitted his roost," muttered he. "Would I could catch a syllable of his speech! Methinks I am afflicted with a more than wonted deafness, or the crafty knave hath practised the art of talking in an under-key to some purpose. His Majesty looks wonder-stricken, yet not displeased. He smiles—what pretended secret can the old mystifier have to make known?"

Henri, meanwhile, listened with evident surprise to the communication of Ruggieri, but offered no interruption beyond an occasional exclamation of astonishment, accompanied by a slight shrug of the shoulders. As the Astrologer concluded, he mused for a moment and then addressed him. "I have observed that mask, Ruggieri," said he smiling, "at the Hôtel de Bourbon, but little thought whose visage it shrouded. Mort-

dieu! thou hast let me into a pretty confidence, Abbé.—I have sufficient, methinks, to answer for in my own indiscretions, without making myself responsible for those of others. However, this young galliard shall have my assistance, that is certain. Hath he seen the Duc de Nevers?"

"No, Sire," returned Ruggieri. "And whatever may betide—into whatever perils his youth and hot blood may lead him, I implore your Majesty to maintain his secret, and to afford him your protection."

"Fear not. You have our royal word. Corbieu! I delight in mysteries and intrigue of all kinds, and will lend him a helping hand with pleasure. He is a youth after my own heart, to engage in such a madcap frolic.—I am charmed with his story, yet I own I can scarce comprehend how a player-girl like this can occasion him so much trouble. Our actresses are not wont to be so hard-hearted, —ha—ha—especially to one of our masker's consequence—eh, Ruggieri?—this is new, methinks."

"There is magic in the case, Sire," replied Ruggieri, mysteriously; "he is spell-bound."

"Ave Maria," said the King, crossing himself devoutly—"Shield us, holy Mother, from the devices of the evil one! And yet, Ruggieri, I must own I am somewhat sceptical as to these imaginary temptations. More witchcraft resides in the dark eyes of that Gelosa, than in thy subtlest charms. From whatever source her attraction originates, it is clear the enchantment is sufficiently potent to drive our Mask to his wit's ends, or he had never committed such extravagances in her pursuit."

"Sire, I have now fulfilled my mission," returned Ruggieri. "I have put your Majesty upon your guard against what may be urged by Crichton. Have I your permission to depart?"

"Stay!" said the King, "a thought strikes me. Du Halde," exclaimed he, motioning to the chief valet, "say to the Queen, our mother, that we would confer an instant with her; and add our request that her Majesty will, at the

same time, take the opportunity of presenting the Demoiselle Esclairmonde."

Du Halde bowed, and departed.

"I have *my* mystery, likewise, Ruggieri; and, singularly enough, this Crichton is in some way mixed up with it. For the first time this evening, I discover that a beauty of the first order has been nurtured within the Louvre, whom no one knows, but with whom I find Crichton is in love. Scarcely have I recovered from the surprise into which I am thrown by this incident, when thou comest to tell me that the pretty boy, with whose canzonettas and romances I have been so much delighted, and who has been the life and soul of our comedies, turns out to be a girl in masquerade, who, pursued by an ardent Italian, flings herself into Crichton's arms. What am I to think of all this, knowing, as I do, that this very Crichton is the favoured lover of the Queen of Navarre, who for him has abjured all her old amourettes, and who watches over him with a jealous frenzy like

that of a first passion? What am I to think of it, I say?"

"That Venus smiled upon his nativity, Sire," replied Ruggieri, with a profound inclination of his head.—"Little is due to himself—much to the celestial influences.—He is predestined to success. By Ahreman! 'tis fortunate for your Majesty that you are not placed in a similar predicament with our Mask. Had your affections been fixed upon the same damsel with Crichton. I fear even *your* chance, Sire, would have been a slight one."

"Sang Dieu!" exclaimed Henri, "they are all of one opinion. These are Chicot's sentiments exactly. Mark me, Ruggieri. As concerns Esclairmonde, I have my own designs. In this matter of the Gelosa, thou and thy Mask may calculate upon my countenance; in return I shall require thy assistance should any unforeseen obstacles present themselves. As to Crichton, we will leave him to the vigilance of our sister Marguerite. A hint will suffice with her. She will save us a world of trouble. In affairs of

gallantry, we shall see whether even the Admirable Crichton can cope with Henri de Valois."

Ruggieri shrugged his shoulders.

"'Tis vain to struggle with the stars, Sire. Che sara, sara."

"But the stars say not that Esclairmonde shall he his—eh, Abbé?"

"His destiny is a proud one," replied Ruggieri; "that at least they have foretold."

At this moment Du Halde approached, announcing "her Majesty, Catherine de Medicis, and the Demoiselle Esclairmonde."

Both were unmasked.

CHAPTER VIII.

ESCLAIRMONDE.

La Reyne-Mère avoit ordinairement de fort belles et honorables filles, avec lesquelles tous les jours en son antichambre on conversoit, on discouroit, on devisoit, tant sagement et tant modestement que l'en n'eust osé faire autrement.

BRANTÔME—*Dames Illustrés. Discours II.*

HENRI Trois, though perfectly heartless, was the politest monarch in the world. With all the refined courtesy of manner, therefore, for which he was so eminently distinguished, he gracefully advanced towards Esclairmonde, and, as she tendered to him her homage, he gallantly raised her hand to his lips, and, with his most captivating smile, proceeded to eulogize her beauty in those soft periods

of adulation which kings know so well how to turn, and no king better than Henri,—exerting himself so well to relieve her embarrassment, that his efforts were not long unsuccessful. To a monarch's attention, indeed, few female hearts are insensible.

Startled at the sight of the Astrologer, for whose unbidden appearance at the fête she felt unable to account, and who, in vain, by sundry significant gestures sought to convey to her some notion of his errand to the Louvre, Catherine de Medicis, ever suspicious of her confidants, could not—or would not—be made to comprehend his hints. But, regarding him with a look of displeasure during the brief ceremonial of presentation, she motioned him aside, so soon as etiquette permitted her, and proceeded to question him as to the cause of his presence. Seeing his lynx eyed mother thus occupied, Henri, not slow to profit by the opportunity which her present distraction afforded him, of assailing the heart of her lovely maid-of-honour,—profferred Esclairmonde his hand, and gently

drew her towards the deep embrasure of one of the magnificent windows, where they might converse unobserved.

Though not habitually sincere in his expressions of admiration, we must, upon this occasion, acquit Henri of any attempt to dissemble. He was greatly struck—as, indeed, he could not fail to be—with the surpassing loveliness of Esclairmonde. Accustomed to the blaze of beauty by which his court was encircled—with a heart little susceptible of any new emotion, and with a disposition to judge somewhat too nicely each attribute of female perfection—he could not help admitting, that not only were the charms of Esclairmonde without parallel, but that there was no point either of her countenance or person, or, what was of equal importance in his eyes, of her attire, which his critical eye did not pronounce to be faultless.

Alas! how inadequate are mere words to convey a notion of the beauty we would wish to portray. The creation of the poet's fancy fades in the evanescent colouring he is com-

pelled to employ. The pen cannot trace what the pencil is enabled so vividly to depict: it cannot accurately define the exquisite contour of the face, neither can it supply the breathing hues of the cheek—the kindling lustre of the eye—the dewy gloss of the lip—or the sheen of the hair, be it black as the raven's wing, or glowing as a sunbeam, or fleecy as a summer cloud. The imagination alone can furnish these details; and to the reader's imagination we would gladly intrust the portraiture of Esclairmonde, venturing, however, to offer a few further hints for his guidance.

Imagine, then, features moulded in the most harmonious form of beauty, and chiselled with a taste, at once softened and severe. The eyes are of a dark deep blue, swimming with a chastened tenderness. An inexpressible charm reigns about the lips; and a slight dimple, in which a thousand Cupids might bask, softly indents the smooth and rounded chin. Raised from the brow so as completely to display its snowy expanse, the rich auburn

hair is gathered in plaits at the top of the head; crisped with light curls at the sides; ornamented with a string of pearls, and secured at the back with a knot of ribbands; a style of head-dress introduced by the unfortunate Mary Stuart, from whom it derived its name, and then universally adopted in the French court. The swan-like throat is encircled by a flat collar of starched muslin, edged with pointed lace. Rich purple velvet of Florence constitutes the material of the dress—the long and sharp boddice of which attracted Henri's attention to the slender shape and distinctly-defined bosom of the lovely Demoiselle.

In passing, we may remark, that the rage for the excessively attenuated waist was then at its highest. Our tight-laced grandmothers were nothing to the wasp-shaped dames of the Court of Catherine de Medicis. Fitting like a cuirass, the corset was tightened around the shape till its fair wearer, if her figure happened to exceed the supposed limits of gracefulness, could scarcely gasp

beneath the parasite folds; while the same preposterous sleeve which characterised the cavaliers of the period, likewise distinguished the dames. Esclairmonde had not neglected due observance of this beauty-outraging mode, or, despite her personal attractions, she had hardly found favour in her Sovereign's eyes. These prodigious coverings of the arms, we are informed, were stuffed out and sustained by a huge pile of wool, and were of such amplitude and width that they would easily have contained three or four of our modern, and, by comparison, moderately-sized, sleeves. Edged with pointed lace, starched like that of the collar, a ruff of muslin completed the gear of the arm. Around her neck was hung a chain of bronze medallions, and a single pear-shaped pearl descended from the acute extremity of her stomacher.

Tall and majestic in figure, the carriage of Esclairmonde was graceful and dignified; and, as he contemplated her soft and sunny countenance, Henri thought that, with one solitary exception, he had never beheld an

approach to its beauty. That exception was Mary of Scotland, whose charms, at the period when she was united to his elder brother, François II., had made a lively impression on his youthful heart, some sense of which he still retained, and whose exquisite lineaments those of Esclairmonde so much resembled, as forcibly to recal their remembrance to his mind. There was the same sleepy langour of the dark blue eye; the same ineffable sweetness of smile; the same pearly teeth displayed by that smile; the same *petit nez retroussé* (that prettiest of all feminine features and well meriting La Fontaine's admiration—

> *Nez troussé, c'est une charme encor selons mon sens,*
> *C'en est même un des plus puissans—*

though perhaps it may evidence a slight tendency to coquetry on the part of the owner)—the same arched and even brow—in short, there were a hundred traits of resemblance which Henri was not slow to discover. In a few minutes he became des-

perately in love; that is, as much in love as a King could be under the circumstances, and moreover such a *blasé* King as Henri.

"By Cupido! belle Esclairmonde," said he, still retaining possession of her hand, "we are half disposed to charge our Mother with lèze-majesté in having so long denied us the gratification we now experience in welcoming to our mask the loveliest of our guests. Mort-Dieu! ardent admirer as she knows we are of beauty, her Majesty's omission savours of positive cruelty; nor should we so readily have overlooked the fault, did not our present satisfaction in some degree reconcile us to our previous disappointment."

"Your Majesty attaches more importance to the circumstance than it merits," returned Esclairmonde, gently endeavouring to disengage her hand. "Flattered as I am by your notice, it is an honour to which I had no pretension to aspire."

"In faith, not so, fair Demoiselle," replied the King. "Beauty has a claim upon our attention to which all other recommendations

are secondary. We were no true Valois were it otherwise. You will not refuse me your hand at the banquet," added he in a lower tone, and with an *empressement* of manner which could not be mistaken. The colour mounted to Esclairmonde's cheeks.

"Sire!" returned she, with a thrill of apprehension, "my hand is at your disposal."

"But not your heart?" asked the King in an impassioned whisper.

Esclairmonde trembled. She saw at once the danger of her position, and she summoned all her firmness to her assistance.

"Sire!" replied she, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and in a tone which struggled to be firm, "my heart is not my own. It is devoted to another."

"Mort-Dieu!" exclaimed the King, unable to control his displeasure. "You avow it—you love——."

"I said not so, Sire."

"How?—and devoted to another?"

"I am betrothed to heaven. My destiny is the cloister."

"Is that all?" said Henri, recovering his composure. "I half suspected there were other ties that bound you to earth. But a cloister—no, no—this must never be."

"It is your royal mother's will that I should take the veil," replied Esclairmonde, timidly glancing at Catherine de Medicis, who, still engaged in deep conference with the Astrologer, was too much absorbed to observe her look. "From her Majesty's resolves there is no alternative. I am her dependant. She will dispose of me as she may see fitting."

"But not without *my* concurrence," returned the King; "which I shall be slow to grant. Mort-Dieu—her Majesty trifles with our sceptre till she fancies that it is her own hand that sways it. I must convince her to the contrary. How she can have entertained a notion so absurd as to think of burying one of the loveliest of her attendants within the gloom of a convent, passes my comprehension. Had it been our Queen Madame Louise de Vaudemont, who ever

carries a missal within her gibecière, I could have understood it. But that our mother, who, though zealous as ourself at her vespers and masses, has no particular fanaticism, should contemplate an act so preposterous, seems unaccountable. Morbleu! she must have some motive."

"Her Majesty has no motive of which I am aware, save zeal in the cause of her religion."

"So it may appear to you, mignonne. But our mother's reasons lie not on the surface. Be they what they may, you need no longer apprehend her interference. Unless prompted by your own inclinations, you will never utter the vows which will bind you wholly to heaven to the neglect of all on earth."

"My lips shall never utter them, said Esclairmonde, with earnestness. But I cannot—dare not accept this boon from you, Sire."

"And why not, ma mie?"

"Monarchs bestow not favours without

anticipation of requital. *I* can make no requital."

"You can, at least, requite me with a smile," said Henri, passionately.

"Upon my knees, Sire," replied Esclairmonde, "would I thank you for the precious boon you promise me, would *thanks* suffice. But I feel they would not, I cannot misunderstand your looks. Gratitude, devotion, loyal affection towards your Majesty, will ever influence my bosom; but not *love*, except such as a subject should feel towards her sovereign. My life—my destiny is at your disposal. But seek not my heart, Sire, which is neither mine to bestow, nor yours to solicit."

"If not your own," said Henri, somewhat maliciously, "to whose keeping have you intrusted it?"

"The question is ungenerous—unworthy of your Majesty."

"You need not answer it then," returned the king: "the rather," added he, with a meaning smile, "that the secret is ours already. Few whispers breathed within these

walls fail to reach our ears; nor were those of the Admirable Crichton so low as to escape our attention. Ha—Demoiselle, are we wrong?"

"Sire!"

"Nay, tremble not, child. I betray no confidences. There is one person, however, against whom I must put you upon your guard. You know her not as well as I do.—Fate grant you never may."

"To whom does your Majesty allude?" asked Esclairmonde, with an expression of uneasiness.

"Have you no suspicion? Does not your heart prompt you?—I' faith you are not so much taken with this Crichton as I imagined, or else, which I can scarce believe, you have little jealousy in your composition."

"Of whom would your Majesty have me entertain a feeling of jealousy? Against whom would you put me on my guard?"

"Whom see you yonder—the star queen of the revel, round whom all the lesser orbs revolve,—who attracts all within her sphere,

and who sheds, as such stars generally do, her rays on all alike?"

"The Queen of Navarre?"

"Precisely. It is of *her* I counsel you to beware."

"I do not understand you, Sire."

"Mort-Dieu! that is strange. I am sufficiently explicit. You don't mean to say, that in alluding to Crichton's amourette with our sister Marguerite I tell you anything new. Why, the whole court rings, or did ring, with it; for, in fact, the scandal is somewhat stale, and no one now concerns himself about it. Our sister changes her gallants so often that her constancy is the only thing which excites a moment's marvel. A short while ago it was Martigues—then La Mole—(her Hyacinthus)—then le beau Saint-Luc—then Monsieur de Mayenne, "*bon compagnon, gros et gras,*" as our brother Henri of Navarre terms him—then Turenne, a caprice—then Bussy D'Amboise, a real passion. After Bussy, appeared Crichton, who having disarmed that hero, till then deemed invincible

in the duel, became the reigning favourite—making the grand corollary to these pleasant premises. So the affair stands at present. How long it is likely to continue, rests with you to determine. Marguerite will never brook a rival; and can you suffer him you love to be the slave—the minion of another?"

"I knew it not. And does he—does the Seigneur Crichton—aspire to *her* affections?"

Henri smiled.

"He has deceived you," said he, after an instant's pause, during which he intently watched the workings of her countenance.

"He has, indeed," replied she with a look of anguish.

"Forget him."

"I will try to do so."

"Nay more,—revenge is in your power. His perfidy demands it. The game is in your hands—Play off a *King* against his *Queen*."

"Never."

"The cloister, then, awaits you."

"I will die rather."

"How?"

"I will never accept the veil."

"What is this? You have no scruples of conscience. Pshaw! the adopted of Catherine de Medicis a heretic—it cannot be."

"It is enough that I am prepared to die."

"You still cling to life, Demoiselle—to hope—to love."

"I cling to heaven, Sire,—in God alone is my support."

"Then why decline the veil?"

Esclairmonde replied not.

"Ha! this hesitation. My suspicions I fear were not unfounded. You are not led away by the damnable doctrines of those arch-impostors, Luther, Zuinglius and Calvin? You are not the dupe of their miserable heresies? You have not compromised your salvation, Demoiselle?"

"I would rather hope I have secured it, Sire," replied Esclairmonde, meekly.

"Speak!" exclaimed Henri, after a muttered Ave.—"Say it is *not* so."

"It *is* so," replied Esclairmonde, firmly.

"What! you avow yourself—."

"I am a Protestant."

"Damnation!" ejaculated Henri, recoiling, telling his beads, and sprinkling himself with perfume from one of the flacons at his girdle—"A Protestant, Mort-Dieu!—I shall expire—a heretic in our presence!—it is an affront to our understanding,—and the girl is so pretty, too—Diable! *Indulgentiam absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum tribue, Domine!*" continued he devoutly crossing himself—"I am stricken with horror—pah! *Ab omni phantasiâ et nequitiâ vel versutiâ diabolicæ fraudis libera me, Domine!*" And he recited another paternoster, performing a fresh aspersion, after which he added with more composure:—"Luckily no one has overheard us. It is not too late to recant your errors. Recal those silly words, and I will endeavour to forget them."

"Sire," replied Esclairmonde, calmly, "I cannot recal what I have asserted. I am of the faith of which I have already avowed myself a member. I reject all other creeds save

that which I *believe* to be the truth. In that I will live—in that, if need be, die."

"Your words may prove prophetic, Demoiselle," returned Henri with a sneer. "Are you aware of the peril in which this mad avowal of your opinions might place you?"

"I am prepared to meet the doom, which in the same cause made martyrs of my father and all my family."

"Tush!—your heretics are ever stubborn. This accounts for your non-compliance with my wishes. However," muttered he, "I shall not give up the point thus readily, nor for a scruple or so in point of conscience, baulk my inclinations. Besides, I remember I have an indulgence from his holiness, Gregory XIII., providing for such a contingency as the present. Let me see, it runs thus: for an affair with a Huguenot, twelve additional masses per week, to be continued for three weeks; item—a rich coffer for the Sacristy of the Innocents; item—a hundred rose-nobles for the Ursulines, and a like sum for the Hieronimites; item—a procession with the Flagel-

lants; and then I have the condonation of his Holiness. The penance is light enough, and were it more severe, I would willingly incur it. 'Tis strange—a Huguenot perdue in the Louvre—this must be enquired into. Our mother must be in the secret. Her mystery — her caution — proclaim her acquaintance with the fact. I will enquire into it at my leisure, as well as investigate all particulars of this girl's story. A Huguenot! Mort-dieu! From whom," added he, addressing Esclairmonde, "did you derive these abominable doctrines, Demoiselle?"

"Your Majesty will excuse my answering that question."

"As you please, mignonne. This is neither the time, nor the place to enforce a reply. Your story and your conduct alike perplex me,– no matter, time will unravel the affair. Now mark me, Demoiselle. As yet I have approached you as a humble suitor, desirous in that capacity to win your regard. I now resume the king, and remind you, that you are my subject, that your life

—your liberty—your person are at my disposal: nor shall I forget the interests of your soul, in which good office I may call in the assistance of some of my most zealous ecclesiastics. If my measures appear harsh, you must thank your own perversity. My wish is to be lenient. Obedience is all I require. Till midnight, therefore, I give you to reflect. On the one hand you will weigh my favour—my protection—my love, for I still love you; on the other, Crichton's infidelity—a cloister,—perchance a darker doom. Make your own election. After the banquet I shall expect your answer."

"My answer will still be the same," returned Esclairmonde.

At this moment, a loud clapping of hands was heard at the further end of the hall, and the music replied to the acclamations in loud and joyous strains. To Esclairmonde the notes sounded wild and dissonant, and the laughing buzz of gaiety pealed like the din of some infernal concourse. The glittering salon and its gay and ever-changing throng

of masks and revellers vanished from her sight, and before her, like a ghastly vision, rose the cowled inquisitors, the stern and threatening judges, the white-robed sisterhood, in whose presence she seemed to stand with hair unbound—her veil thrown across her eyes. She shrank as for protection, and recovered her senses only to encounter the leering and libertine gaze of Henri.

Again the music sounded joyously, and the torches of the bransle being lighted, the giddy dancers passed them in a whirl of flame.

"Ma foi, we lose time here," said the King. "Not a word, Demoiselle—as you value your life or his, of our converse, to Crichton—should he still, as is not unlikely, make his appearance at our revel.—Resume your mask and maintain your composure. So, 'tis well."

Though scarcely able to command herself, Esclairmonde, in compliance with the King's request, placed her violet-coloured mask upon

her face, and yielded, not without a shudder, her hand.

As they issued from the recess in which their conversation had taken place, the Jester Chicot advanced towards the monarch.

"What wouldst thou, gossip?" said Henri. "Thy sapient countenance is charged with more than its usual meaning."

"A proof I am neither in love nor drunk, compère," replied Chicot; "as in either case our family resemblance becomes the stronger, your majesty being always either the one or the other, and not unfrequently both. The superabundance of my meaning, therefore, you will lay to the charge of my sobriety and discretion."

"Ah—bah!—this jesting is ill-timed."

"Then it is in keeping with your Majesty's love-making."

"Be silent, sirrah, or say what brings thee hither!"

"What shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour?"

"And who is the man, gossip?"

"He who threatens, more than Henri of Lorraine, or Henri of Navarre, or Philip of Spain, or despite the Salic law, your royal mother, to depose you, Sire—see how your loyal subjects quit your side. If your Majesty decline the office, permit the Demoiselle Esclairmonde to offer him welcome."

"Ha! I begin to comprehend thee. Is it he our University hath nicknamed the Admirable Crichton whom thou wouldst announce."

"I took the precaution to warn your Majesty of his advent, as I would apprize a friend of a jealous husband's return."

"Crichton!" exclaimed Esclairmonde, roused from her stupor by the mention of her lover's name—"he here! May I crave your permission, Sire, to rejoin the Queen-Mother?"

"By no means, mignonne," replied Henri, coldly. I would not deprive you of the pleasure of witnessing our interview with this phœnix of schoolmen. You will, therefore remain near me — and neglect not,"

added he, in a tone only calculated for Esclairmonde's hearing, "the caution I have given you. You shall have proof enough of his inconstancy anon. Messeigneurs—" added he aloud, addressing the lords in attendance—"approach. The victor of the University is at hand. It is not often that it falls to a King's lot to number a scholar amongst his courtiers. You may remember, messeigneurs, in our last tourney, and at the after-combat of the wild beasts, when Crichton slew our African lion, we foretold his distinction. He *has* distinguished himself, but in a way we least expected. We promised him a boon—to-night we will redeem our royal pledge. Joyeuse, bid her Majesty of Navarre attend upon us. To her, no doubt, our welcome will possess peculiar interest. Madame, our mother, if your conference be ended with Ruggieri, your presence will lend additional grace to our reception. Be seated, we pray you. We would welcome the Admirable Crichton as a King should welcome him."

Seating himself upon a richly-ornamented fauteuil, brought by his attendants, Henri was instantly encompassed by his courtiers, who formed a brilliant semicircle around him.

Catherine de Medicis, whose conference with the Astrologer had been long since ended, remarked Henri's attention to Esclairmonde, with some dissatisfaction. Accustomed, however, rather to encourage her son's wayward inclinations than to check them (and therein lay the secret of her rule), she allowed no expression of displeasure to escape her, but took her seat, majestically, by his side. Behind Catherine crouched Ruggieri, uneasily shuffling to and fro, with the glare and the shifting movement of a caged hyæna.

Nearer to the King and clinging to his throne for support, was placed Esclairmonde, now almost, in a state of distraction.

Chicot familiarly reclined himself at his Sovereign's feet, with his marotte in hand, and Henri's long-eared, large-eyed, favourite on his knee, its pensile tresses sweeping

the floor. Poor Chatelard! As the gentle animal submitted to his caress, Henri thought for an instant of her from whom he had received him as a sister's remembrance—he thought of Mary of Scotland—of her captivity—of her charms,—and of Esclairmonde's strange resemblance to her—and this brought back the whole tide of passion.

"Singular—most singular," mused he. "Would she had been a Jewess or a Pagan! There might then have been some hope of her. But a Huguenot—ouf!"

CHAPTER IX.

HENRI TROIS.

Don Carlos—À genoux, duc ! recois ce collier—sois fidèle !—
Par saint Etienne, duc, je te fais chevalier.—
VICTOR HUGO. *Hernani. Acte IV. Scène VI.*

CRICHTON's arrival at the revel had created a sensation throughout the room. His brilliant achievements at the University, which, coupled with his gallant and chivalrous and anything but scholastic character, excited universal astonishment, formed the chief topic of conversation, and every body expressed his surprise as to the time when he acquired that wondrous store of erudition which had confounded all the wisdom, and perplexed the

subtlest dialectitians of the land. That he had it by intuition was the prevailing opinion. How else could he have attained such boundless information? He was seen at the chace, the hall of arms, the carousal, the fête of yesterday; at all and each of which it was observed, that he entered with more zest into the spirit of the scene, and pursued the "passing Cynthia of the minute" with more complete abandonment, than any one who had been present with him. In short, he had been every where, except where he might be supposed to be, alone and in his study. He had been the life of every thing; dashing at all, and succeeding in all; rejecting nothing in the whole round of pleasurable amusement—now swayed by the smile of beauty—now attracted by the beck of the gamester, whose dice seemed obedient to his will, with such skill did he handle the box—now pledging toast for toast with the votary of Bacchus, whose glowing cups seemed to have for him no inebriation. He had been all this and more; and yet this reckless,

heedless voluptuary, who pursued enjoyment with an intensity of zeal unknown even to her most ardent followers, had excelled the learned and laborious denizens of wisdom's chosen retreat.

All this was incomprehensible. There was only one way of solving the riddle, and to that the superstition of the age disposed almost every one to attach credence. A mind so over-informed—a person so richly gifted—could only have become so by knowledge wrested from unearthly powers. This conclusion was somewhat negatived by Crichton's notorious and undeniable religious observances. But it at least served to invest his character with mystery, and consequently with interest. Every body likes the marvellous; and in the sixteenth century people raved about it. Politics and religion, which were then (even more than in these days) so intimately mixed up together, that the consideration of the one necessarily involved that of the other, were left undiscussed by the statesmen who were occupied in can-

vassing the character of Crichton. If a cavalier adverted to a duel, it was one in which Crichton had figured either as principal or second. If a gallant commenced a flirtation, he found his inamorata's mind occupied with the prevailing idea. Nothing was talked of, or regarded, but what had some reference, direct or indirect, to Crichton.

As he delayed his appearance, every one became feverish with impatience. Nothing went on as it ought to do—never had ball at the Louvre been known to be so dull. Even the flirtations wanted spirit—"He is shockingly late," said one. "I begin to be apprehensive he will not come at all," said another. "Don't think of such a thing," said a third. "Take my word for it he will be here anon," rejoined a fourth speaker, the Abbé de Brantôme; "your meteors always rise late." And so it proved. Just as Crichton was given up, he arrived.

All was animation in an instant. The report flew along the saloon on wings swifter than those of scandal. "He is arrived," was

echoed from mouth to mouth. The songsters were deserted, though the band was Catherine's choicest Italian company; the ballet was abandoned, though it had only just commenced—though the *danseuses* were the most graceful imaginable, and *à moitié nués*—a great recommendation in those days as in our own; the bransle-de-flambeau was neglected; though the perfumed torches had reached the point when their blaze makes one giddy whirl of many-coloured flame; the stately pavanne broke into a quick movement; the grave pazzameno lost all bounds; the commotion became general; the infection irresistible. Eyes, brighter than the jewels of their wearers, rained their influence upon Crichton as he passed, and odorous bouquets fell at his feet as if they had dropped like manna from the skies. Human nature could not resist homage so flattering, and Crichton appeared for an instant almost overpowered by it.

The same richness of taste which characterised Crichton's costume of the morning

distinguished his evening attire. He wore no mask—nor, what was then generally adopted, a toque or cap with a panache of gay-coloured feathers—neither had he assumed any garb of character or fancy. His dress was a rich suit of white satin slashed with azure, the just-au-corps and chausses of which fitted without a crease to the modelled limbs. Having divested himself moreover of his Spanish cloak and plumed cap in the hall of entrance, nothing interfered with the exact display of his symmetrical person; and as, with a step elastic and buoyant as that of the winged Mercurius yet withal majestical, with figure well-poised, he passed through the crowded groups, he appeared like one of those shapes of superhuman grace and beauty which have started almost into existence from the spirit-breathing pencil of Retzch, or that of our English Retzch, Franklin.*

Not a trace of the fatigue which might be

* See the glorious illustrations to *Chevy Chace* by this gentleman; a set of designs which are worthy of the fine old ballad—worthy of Flaxman.

supposed to be incident to his prolonged intellectual conflict and exertions, was discernible in his proud, steadfast features. High emotions were stamped upon his lofty brow — his countenance was radiant — and a smile sat upon his lip. With a chivalrous and courteous grace he returned the manifold congratulations and compliments that were showered upon him, neither appearing to avoid nor yet to court attention, but essaying, as speedily as he might, to pass on in the direction of the King, who, as the reader is aware, was seated at the upper end of the grand saloon. While he thus threaded his course, new exclamations of admiration resounded on all hands, and, as the spectators followed his god-like figure, fresh in its youthfulness and apparently inexhaustible vigour, many reflections were made, as to whether mere *humanity* could ever be so perfect.

Presently Du Halde made his appearance; and, sensible that all eyes were upon him, that mirror of courtliness and etiquette per-

formed his task to admiration. The announcement was quite a scene in its way.

Upon Henri's intimation being made known, a new impetus was given to the assemblage. In vain did the almost bewildered Du Halde raise high his fleur-de-lis-covered rod of office. In vain did he shrug his shoulders, and make the most pathetic remonstrances, and to remonstrances add entreaties, and to entreaties, threats. The tide would not be repressed. But, like that of the Scholars of the morning, pressed forward quite resolved, it would seem, to be present at Crichton's audience with the King. Deference, however, for their Sovereign's presence withheld them as they came within a few paces of his Majesty, from advancing further. The royal guard of halberdiers, pages and lacqueys, placed themselves in front, and thus a dense phalanx of cavaliers and dames of every age and rank, was instantly formed — including the magnates of the hierarchy and the state, in the proudest attire of their orders, or in mask or domino or other quaintly-devised habiliments.

The clamour subsided, as, preceded and announced by Du Halde, Crichton presented himself to the King with a graceful and profound obeisance. The music also ceased, there being no longer any reason for its continuance. The distant minstrel strained his neck to gaze at what was going forward in the royal circle, and the attendant at the beaufet took the opportunity of pledging his companions in a brimmer of Cyprus.

Meanwhile, the royal group had been increased by the arrival of the lovely Marguerite de Valois, and her scarcely less lovely maids of honour, La Torigni, Françoise de Montmorenci, surnamed la belle Fosseuse, and La Rebours; the two latter of whom have been immortalised by Sterne, in his luculent chapter on "Whiskers;" and who, subsequently to our narrative, contributed to the list of beauties to whom Henri of Navarre accorded his favours.

The Queen Louise, with her discreet dames, had just withdrawn, it having been whispered

to her Majesty that her august spouse had betrayed symptoms of a new passion.

Henri Trois was wholly unprepared for, and not altogether pleased by, the rapturous demonstrations of his court's admiration of Crichton; but he was too much of an adept in simulation, too deeply versed in his mother's Machiavelian principles, to suffer any indication of displeasure to escape him. On the contrary, he received the laurel'd scholar with his blandest and most deceptive smile, graciously extending him his hand; and, apparently not content with this mark of his friendship, instantly afterwards raised him from his kneeling posture, and, opening his arms, cordially embraced him.

An irrepressible murmur of applause following this act of gracious condescension shewed that Henri had not miscalculated its effect upon the enthusiastic minds of the spectators. In fact, despite his malevolence, he could not be entirely insensible to the influence of the scene; and, in common with

all present, felt and recognised the majesty and might of mind, and its wondrous combination in the present case with personal advantages, sufficient in themselves to rivet the attention of all beholders. He knew that he was in the presence of one of the master spirits of the age; and for an instant, forgetting Esclairmonde, half persuaded himself he was in reality the gracious monarch his courtiers conceived him to be.

There was one, however, who viewed his conduct in a different light; but she was mute.

"Vive le Roi!—Vive notre bon Henriot!" cried Chicot, who had withdrawn himself on Crichton's approach, addressing the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who stood near him, "The grande rue Saint-Jacques appears to be the high-road to his Majesty's favour. Henceforth we shall all become scholars, and I may exchange my fool's bauble for a folio, my cockscomb for the *cappa rotunda*, and my surcoat for the prescribed *tabaldi seu houssiæ longæ* of the college of Navarre. How say you? It is

only a year or two since our dear Henriot took to the study of Latin in the grammar of Denon. It is never too late to learn. And if the good Pantagruel propounded nine thousand, seven hundred, sixty-and-four conclusions, as his historian, Doctor Alcofribas affirmeth, why should not I offer a like number for controversy?"

"I see no reason to the contrary," replied Joyeuse. "Thy theses will, in all probability, be as intelligible and irrefragable as those of the sophists; and, as extremes are said to meet, thou mayst be as near to Crichton, as the line of intersection which divides the heights of folly from the depth of wisdom will permit. Meantime, pay attention to thy liege and master; for methinks he is about to bestow a gift on Crichton not unworthy of himself, or of the acceptor."

And so it proved. Commanding Crichton to kneel, Henri detached the lesser collar of the Saint-Esprit from his throat, and placing the glittering badge around the scholar's neck, unsheathed his sword from its crimson

velvet scabbard, and striking him thrice with the blade upon the shoulder, added, "in the name of God, and of our lord and patron, Saint-Denis, we create thee, James Crichton, Knight Commander of the holy and honourable Order of the Saint-Esprit! We do not say, support its statutes and maintain its splendour without spot. That were needless. The name of Crichton is sufficient to preserve its glory untarnished."

Universal acclamations followed this gracious act of the monarch.

Crichton was not unmoved by this distinguished mark of Henri's favour. And the tone of voice in which his reply was delivered, plainly bespoke his emotion.

"Your Majesty has bestowed upon me a boon," said he, "which I should have esteemed more than adequate reward for long and zealous service, or for highest desert. But as I can call to mind no such service, can discern no such desert, I must esteem myself wholly unworthy of your distinction. This consideration, however, while

it annihilates all fancied claim to honourable promotion, enhances my gratitude. Not, as it is wont in ordinary cases, does the favour succeed the service. In this instance it precedes it. And we shall see whether gratitude prove not a stronger stimulant than interest or ambition. Devotion is all I can offer your Majesty. I have a sword, and I dedicate it to your cause; blood, and it shall flow in your defence; life, and it shall be laid down at your bidding. Emulative of your own great deeds at Jarnac and Moncontour; beneath your banner, Sire; beneath the Oriflamme of France, it shall be my aim to make the holy and illustrious Order with which you have invested me, the proudest guerdon of knightly enterprise."

"We accept your devotion, Chevalier Crichton," returned Henri. "We rejoice in your professions; and, by Saint Michael! are as haught of your love as was our good grandsire, François I., of the fellowship in arms of the fearless and reproachless Bayard. The ceremonial of your installation shall take

place on Friday, within the church of the Augustines, where you will take the oath of the Order, and subscribe to its statutes. After the solemnity, you will dine at the Louvre with the whole assembled fraternity of the Knights Commanders, and in the meantime, that nothing may be omitted, our treasurer will have it in charge to disburse to your uses our accustomed benefice of eight hundred crowns."

"Sire, your favours overwhelm me."

"Tut!" interrupted Henri, "we would not be outdone by our subjects in the expression of our admiration. Besides," added he, smiling, "our conduct, after all, may not be so disinterested as at first sight it would appear. Under any plea we are glad to include within our newly-instituted and cherished Order, such a name as that of the Admirable Crichton—a name which reflects more lustre on us, than our knighthood can confer upon it; and, as freely as it was made, we accept your pledge.—We may anon take you at your word, and require a service at your hands."

"You have but to name it, Sire, and if—"

"Nay, we may ask too much," replied Henri, with a gracious smile.

"Ask my life—'tis yours, Sire."

"We may ask more."

"Your Majesty can ask nothing that I will not attempt."

"Nothing you will refuse."

"Nothing—by my sword I swear it!"

"Enough—we are well content."

As Henri spoke, a half-stifled sob was heard proceeding from some one near him. The sound reached Crichton's ears, and beat (he knew not why) like a presage of ill upon his heart. He half repented of his vow. But it was too late to recal it.

Henri could scarcely conceal his exultation.

"We will no longer detain our guests," said he; "this audience must be dull work to them. And, in sooth, we are somewhat ennuyée'd by it ourselves. Let the ballet proceed."

Accordingly, the King's pleasure being

made known, the musicians instantly struck up a lively strain; the maskers dispersed to comment upon the scene they had witnessed; and the ball re-commenced with more spirit than heretofore.

CHAPTER X.

CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.

———*Medicæa* Virago
Imperat, usa dolis, artibus usa suis.
Pasquil recorded in the Journal of Henri III. 1585,

"PAR la mort dieu! mon cher Crichton," said Henri in a languid tone, helping himself to some of the perfumed confectionary which he carried in his escarcelle, "I am quite taken with the brilliancy and whiteness of your collar; I thought my own Courtray gauderonneurs inimitable, but your artist far exceeds my Flemish pretenders. I am critical in these matters, you know — Heaven having endued me with a taste for costume."

"By which the world has lost an inimitable tailor, and France gained an indifferent monarch," whispered Chicot. "A poor ex-

change, your Majesty. Would you but rule your kingdom as you govern your wardrobe, my liege, there is little doubt but you would *cut out* all sovereigns, past, present, and to come."

"Peace, droll!" exclaimed Henri, bestowing a slight *soufflet* upon his Jester. "But, as we live! this Admirable Scot exceedeth all our preconceived notions. None of us can compete with him, messeigneurs, and yet we labour hard enough in our vocation."

"True," replied Chicot. "*Dum moliuntur—dum comuntur, annus est.* Your Majesty will observe the progress I have made in Terence. It is not for nothing that you have acquired the titles of '*Gauderonneur des colets de votre femme, et mercier du palais.*'"

"Corbieu! messieurs," continued Henri, heedless of the interruption, and apparently struck with a bright idea, "I abandon for ever my pet project, the *plat Saint-Jean*, and direct you henceforth to assume the collar à la Crichton!"

"Your Majesty will then do manifest injustice to your own invention," said Crichton, "by so styling my poor imitation of your own surpassing original. And I pray of you alter not the designation of a vestment which appears to have some importance in your eyes; let it bear the name of him alone to whom the merit of the conception is due. I can by no means consent to hold honours which belong not to me; and no one would think for an instant of disputing with your Majesty the eminence which you have so justly attained, of being the best-dressed prince of the politest and best-dressed people in the universe."

"You flatter me," replied Henri, smiling; "but still I must retain my opinion. And now a truce to compliment. Do not let me detain you, mon cher, nor you, messieurs—I know you love the dance. The Navarroise is just struck up—that figure has always—attraction for our sister Marguerite. Pray ye, solicit the favour of her hand."

With a smile like a sunbeam, the royal

Circe extended her hand to Crichton, as he advanced towards her.

That smile went like a dagger to the heart of Esclairmonde.

"An instant, Madame," said Crichton. "Ere I quit his Majesty's presence I have a suit to prefer."

"Say on," replied Henri.

"Were my intercession in your behalf needful, you should have it," said Marguerite de Valois, "But your interest with the King is greater than my own."

"Still let me have your voice, Madame," returned Crichton, "for my solicitation refers to one of your own sex."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Marguerite, in surprise.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the affair of the Geloso this morning at the University?"

"The brave youth who preserved your life at the hazard of his own," exclaimed Marguerite,—"Ah! how can I sufficiently reward him?"

"I will tell you how to do so—that youth—that supposed Geloso ——."

"Well!"

"Turns out to be a maiden in masquerade."

"A maiden!" ejaculated Marguerite, "Ah! this adds materially to the interest of the adventure. She must have strong motives, methinks, to risk her life for you; and it is for *her* you sue?"

"For her liberty—her life ——"

"The life of your preserver was, I heard, endangered by the assassin's blow," said Henri. "But how, or by whom, is the liberty of the girl, since such appears to be the sex of your deliverer, threatened?"

"By the traitor Ruggieri," replied Crichton sternly.

"Ha!" exclaimed Catherine de Medicis, starting to her feet, and fixing a glance upon Crichton like that of a lioness—"consider well what you advance, messire—this pertains to me. Ruggieri a traitor!—to whom?"

"To his Sovereign, Madame—to the King,

your son," answered Crichton, resolutely returning Catherine's gaze.

"By Notre Dame! this concerns *me*, it would seem," said Henri. "Nay, frown not, Madame. Since his reported medication of our brother Charles's beverage, we have ever misdoubted your Astrologer; and, to speak truth, we wonder not at Crichton's charges; for the countenance of Ruggieri carries treason in each mystic and intricate wrinkle. We are slow to anger, and will not judge him unheard. First let us know more of the fair Gelosa. How is *she* connected with Ruggieri?"

"She is his prisoner, Sire," replied Crichton, "confined within the turret, belonging to her Majesty, near the Hôtel de Soissons."

"With what intent?" asked Henri with affected indifference.

"That, Sire, I have yet to learn. I have myself penetrated the turret. I have heard moans. I have seen her through the bars of her cell——"

"And you have dared to force your way thither!" exclaimed Catherine — "by my right hand, messire, you shall repent your temerity!"

"The girl risked her life for mine, Madame, —my head shall be the price of her deliverance."

"I take you at your word, messire; you shall have the girl if you will adventure again within that tower—the sole ransom I shall exact for her—shall be your head."

"Beware—beware," whispered Marguerite de Valois, pressing Crichton's hand tenderly; "as you value my love, say no more. See you not, she smiles; one step more, and you tread upon your grave."

"It matters not," replied Crichton, withdrawing his hand from the clasp of the Queen of Navarre. "Your Majesty's threats," added he, addressing Catherine de Medicis, "will hardly deter me from the execution of an enterprise in which my honour, not to say humanity, is so deeply implicated."

"Ha! you brave me, messire."

"No—no," said Marguerite, imploringly—"He does not, mother."

"I do not brave you, Madame," returned Crichton, "I but uphold the oppressed. My head be the penalty of my failure."

"Be it so," answered Catherine, reseating herself.

"And *en attendant*, Chevalier Crichton, you withdraw the charge of treason which you preferred against Ruggieri?" said Henri.

"No, Sire," replied Crichton, "I accuse Cosmo Ruggieri, Abbé of Saint-Mahé, of high treason, and lèze-Majesté against your royal person; of machinations against the state, of which your Majesty is the head; which charges I will substantiate against him by proof unquestionable."

"By what proof?" demanded Henri.

"By this scroll, Sire, set forth in alchemical characters; unintelligible, it may be, to your Majesty, or to any one here assembled; but which my acquaintance with its cipher enables

me to interpret. This scroll, exhibiting a scheme for the destruction of your life, seized within Ruggieri's retreat, upon his own table, with the traces of his own ink scarce dried upon it, furnishes proof incontrovertible of a dark conspiracy against your safety, of which this accursed Astrologer is the chief instrument. Let his person be secured, Sire; and, difficult of comprehension as the mystic letters of this document may appear, I undertake to make them clear and evident, as his guilt is black and damning, to the tribunal before which he shall be arraigned."

Henri looked for an instant irresolutely towards his mother. Ruggieri was about to cast himself at the King's feet, but at a gesture from Catherine he remained stationary, regarding Crichton with a scowl of bitterest animosity.

"Your boasted powers of logic, Chevalier Crichton," said the Queen Mother, "might have taught you, that from unsound premises false conclusions must needs be drawn. If you have no further proof against Ruggieri

than that adduced from this document, your charge falls to the ground."

"Not so Madame; this cipher implicates a higher power than Ruggieri."

"It does proceed from a higher source than that of Ruggieri," replied Catherine. "That scroll is my contrivance."

"Yours, Madame!" exclaimed Henri, in surprise.

"You are aware of her Majesty's maxim, Sire," whispered Chicot—

> *"Il faut tout tenter et faire*
> *Pour son ennemi défaire.—*

Here we have an exemplification of it."

"Question me not further, my son," returned Catherine. "Be assured that I watch over your interests with maternal solicitude; and that if I work in darkness, I have only one aim—the maintenance of your glory and your power. Of that be satisfied. Hereafter you shall know the real purport of this scroll. Leave the cares of rule to me."

"*Puero regnante, fœminâ imperante,*" whispered Chicot.

"This hair-brained youth has marred one of my best-laid plans," continued Catherine, scornfully; "but I pardon his indiscretion, for his zeal in your behalf, Henri. Let him use more caution in future. Zeal over-much becomes officiousness, and will as such be resented."

"The zeal you reprobate, Madame," replied Crichton, proudly, "prompts me, at the peril perhaps of my life, to tell you, even *you* are the dupe of Ruggieri's artifices. This scroll is not what you believe it to be."

"Ha!" exclaimed Catherine.

"From its tenor I am satisfied it is not the document he had your authority to prepare."

"Now, by our Lady! this insolence passeth all endurance," cried Catherine, furiously. "Henri, your Sire would have hewed off his best Knight's spurs at the heel ere your mother's word had been doubted!"

"Do not irritate yourself, Madame," replied the King, coolly. "The Chevalier Crichton's chief fault in your eyes appears to

be his anxiety for my safety, the which I own I find it difficult to blame. Believe me, with all your subtlety, you are no match for Ruggieri. And I would willingly hear our advocate out, ere I relinquish an investigation which appears to involve such important consequences to our safety."

Catherine grew pale, but she spoke with calmness.—"Proceed, Sir," said she, addressing Crichton—"the King wishes it. I will answer you."

"To prove to you, Madame," said Crichton, "how much you have been deceived, I will ask you whether it was by your authority this image was prepared?"

And Crichton drew forth from his pourpoint a small waxen figure so moulded as perfectly to represent the person of the king.

"Par Notre-Dame de Bon Secours," stammered Henri, growing white, in spite of his rouge, with choler and affright, "an image of ourself—ha!—"

"Pierced with a poignard to the heart,

Sire," replied Crichton—"Behold where the puncture is made!"

"I see it,—I see it," ejaculated Henri, "Ave Maria!"

"Sire!" exclaimed Ruggieri, flinging himself at the King's feet, "hear me! hear me!"

"Away, infidel dog!" cried Henri, spurning Ruggieri from him. "Thy touch is pollution."

Exclamations of horror burst from the group immediately around his Majesty. Swords flashed from their scabbards; and had it not been for the interference of Catherine de Medicis, to whose knees the affrighted Astrologer clung in mortal terror, he had perished upon the spot.

"Back, messeigneurs!" exclaimed Catherine, rising and spreading her arms over Ruggieri; "strike him not—he is innocent—on your allegiance I charge you, sheathe your swords!"

"Be tranquil, gentlemen," said the King, who had by this time collected himself—"Par la Mort-dieu! we will deal with this

traitor ourselves.—A waxen figure, forsooth! Let us look at it nearer.—By our faith! the knave has caught our lineaments far better than our sculptor, Barthélemy Prieur!—this dagger plunged into the heart—we have felt a strange and unaccountable oppression in that region these three days. Is this accursed image the handiwork of Ruggieri?"

"Undoubtedly, Sire," replied Crichton.

"'Tis false, Sire. I had no hand in its manufacture. By my salvation, I swear it," ejaculated the affrighted Astrologer.

"Thy salvation!" echoed Chicot, with a scream of derision—"ha! ha! thou hast long since lost all chance of Paradise!—Rather swear by thy perdition, miscreant Abbé."

"I found it within his chamber," said Crichton. "And, although your Majesty will treat this superstitious device with the scorn such a futile attempt against your safety merits, that consideration will not relieve Ruggieri from the charge of treasonable practices against your life. For like attempts, La

Mole and Coconnas were adjudged to the stake."

"And by the stake he dies," replied the King, "if this offence be brought home to him. The question shall enforce the truth. After this, Madame," continued Henri, addressing his mother, "we think you will scarcely seek to advocate further the conduct of your Astrologer."

"Were I satisfied of his guilt assuredly not, my son," returned Catherine. "But what proof have I that the whole of this accusation is not a contrivance of this fair-spoken Scot, to rid himself of a foe, for such he confesses Ruggieri to be."

"It *is* so," replied Ruggieri. "I will satisfy your Majesty of my innocence—and of Crichton's motives for this accusation. Grant me but time."

"I have said that a higher power than that of Ruggieri was implicated in this matter," returned Crichton. "That power is—"

"Forbear!" cried Ruggieri. "Lead me

to the rack; but utter not that name; you know not what you would do."

"Villain!" exclaimed Crichton, "you find I am too well acquainted with your crimes. I have read the secrets of your heart. I would confront you with him you have betrayed. Would he were here to confound you with his presence!"

"He *is* here," replied a masked figure, stepping suddenly forwards.

"The Mask!" exclaimed Crichton.

"As we live, our Mask in person!" said Henri. "We begin to have some insight into all this mystery."

A momentary pause succeeded, during which no one spoke. The Mask at length broke silence.

"The charge you have brought against Ruggieri, Chevalier Crichton," said he, sternly, "is false, unfounded, and malicious; and that you have made it wilfully, and knowing it to be such, I will approve upon you by mortal combat; to which, as Ruggieri's voluntary champion, I here defy you."

"And will *you* undertake the felon Ruggieri's defence? will *you* draw your sword in his behalf?" asked Crichton, with a look of incredulity and surprise.

"King of France," said the Mask, dropping upon one knee before Henri, "I beseech your Majesty to grant me right of combat à outrance with all weapons and without favour against the Chevalier Crichton."

Henri hesitated.

"Nay, my son," replied Catherine, "this is my quarrel—not Ruggieri's—I am glad to find I have one sword ready to start from its scabbard in my behalf. You cannot refuse this appeal."

"You have our permission, then," returned Henri: "yet—"

"I here, then, repeat my defiance," interrupted the Mask, rising haughtily, and hurling his glove to the ground—"I challenge you, Chevalier Crichton, to make good your accusation with your life."

"Enough," returned Crichton; "I accept your challenge, and I counsel you, mon-

seigneur, not to throw aside your mask when you draw your blade in a cause so infamous and debasing. I am well content that Ruggieri's fate be left to the decision of my hand. Joyeuse," continued he, "may I calculate upon your services in this matter?"

"Most certainly," replied the Vicomte; "but will not your adversary favour us with his name or title? As a commander of the Saint-Esprit you are aware you cannot exchange thrusts with one of inferior rank."

"If *I* am satisfied, monsieur le Vicomte;" replied the Mask, haughtily, "to wave that consideration, a cadet of fortune like the Chevalier Crichton, will have little need to take exceptions. We meet as equals only with our swords."

Saying which the Mask disdainfully placed his ungloved hand upon the hilt of his rapier. Crichton regarded him fixedly for a moment.

"Sir Mask," said, he, at length, in a tone of cold contempt, "whoever you may be, and I have no desire to publish your incognito — whatever blood may flow in your veins, be it

derived from prince or peer, I hold it cheap as water in the ignoble cause which you have espoused—and were you base-born vassal, as I believe you to be proudly-blazoned gentleman, and your quarrel the right, it would weigh more with me than noblest lineage or loftiest heraldry — Cadet of fortune I am. Nevertheless, even the royal Henri might cross swords with me without degradation. My blood is that of the Stuart—my heritage an untarnished name—my portion, a stainless sword.— In God and Saint Andrew do I place my trust!"

"Bravely spoken," cried Saint-Luc.

"You are satisfied of your antagonist's rank?" asked Joyeuse of Crichton.

"We will answer for him ourselves," said Henri.

The Vicomte raised the glove and thrust it in his girdle.

"Whom may I have the honour of addressing as your second, monseigneur?" asked Joyeuse, in a tone of constrained courtesy.

"Ludovico di Gonzaga, Duke of Nevers

and of Rothelais," replied the Mask haughtily.

"Vive-Dieu!" exclaimed the Vicomte. This is better than I anticipated. Monsieur le Duc, I shall be delighted to confer with you on this duel."

At the mention of his name, the Duc de Nevers, a grave and stately nobleman, wearing the full insignia of the order of the Saint-Esprit, stepped forward, in some astonishment. But, after having conversed an instant with the Mask, he advanced, and with a formal salutation, took Crichton's glove from the hand of the Vicomte.

"Par la Mort Dieu! messeigneurs," said Henri, "I had rather the whole science of astrology were exterminated, together with its idolatrous professors, than that you should give battle to each other upon grounds so frivolous, and for a cause so unworthy of your swords. However, since you will have it so, I will not oppose your inclinations. Let the combat take place at early noon to-morrow, within the courts of the Louvre, where ourselves and our immediate

followers will attend. Our pleasure, however, is, that in lieu of the duel with rapier and dagger which, remembering the end of Caylus and Maugiron, we interdict, you break a lance together in the lists—on the issue of the third course let the Astrologer's fate depend. We will not have the life of a valiant cavalier, or of one dear to us, sacrificed in this worthless dispute. Meantime Ruggieri shall be placed under the safeguard of the walls of the Châtelet to abide the issue of the encounter—and may God defend the right!"

"I will answer for Ruggieri's attendance," said Catherine de Medicis. "Let him be escorted to our turret; we will place our own guard over him."

"As you please, Madame," returned Henri; "but have a care that you produce him at the lists."

"Fear me not, my son. He shall appear to-morrow."

"And now, monseigneur, suffer me to say," said the King, turning to the Mask—"Mort Dieu, vanished!—"

The figure had disappeared.

"Cousin of Nevers," said the King, "a word. Gentlemen, a little further off, if you please. Nay, mignonne," added he, in a whisper to Esclairmonde, "we have not yet done with you. This tiresome challenge has put you out of our head. *Your* turn will come presently —nay, mark that look! Does not that glance speak volumes? — Now, monsieur le Duc, touching this Mask;" and here Henri's voice became inaudible, except to him whom he addressed.

"And now for the Navarroise," said Crichton, taking the hand of Marguerite de Valois.

"I thought you had forgotten it," replied the Queen, smiling. "But let us go.—I am wearied of this crowd. We shall, at least, be alone in the dance."

And, all eyes following their majestic figures, they swept down the salon.

While this was passing, Catherine motioned Ruggieri to approach her.

The Astrologer threw himself at her feet, as if imploring compassion.

"I would question thee ere thou depart," said she aloud, adding in a whisper, "this combat must never take place."

"It must not," returned the Astrologer.

"I will find means to prevent it. Give me the phial thou hast ever with thee — the Borgia tincture."

"That were too tardy, Madame: — this potion you will find more efficacious. It is the same deadly mixture as that prepared, by your Majesty's orders, for the Admiral Coligni, which you intrusted to his valet, Dominique D'Albe."

"Peace —I will find a surer agent than that timid slave," said Catherine, taking the phial which Ruggieri slipped into her hands. "I must see the Mask to-night," continued she. "Give me the key of thine inner chamber in the turret — I will instruct him how to come thither unperceived by the subterranean passage from the Hôtel de Soissons."

"The key is here, Madame," replied the Astrologer.

"Let Ruggieri be removed," said Catherine,

aloud; "and a triple guard placed at the portal of our hôtel. Suffer none to go forth, or to enter—save at our order."

"Your Highness's commands shall be obeyed," said the Captain Larchant, advancing towards Ruggieri, and surrounding him with some half-dozen halberdiers.

"And your devilish schemes circumvented," added Chicot, gliding from the fauteuil of the Queen Mother, whither he had crept unperceived. "And, now to apprise Crichton of his danger!—Nombril du Pape!—I tremble lest our Jezebel should find an opportunity of effecting her accursed designs."

Full of apprehension for Crichton's safety, the Jester was about to follow the course taken by the Scot and his illustrious partner, but he found them surrounded by such a crowd of eager spectators, that approach to their immediate vicinity was next to impossible. He was constrained, therefore, to remain stationary, Presently a lively flourish of music told that the Navarroise had commenced; and all the Jester could discern was

the tall and majestic figure of Crichton, revolving with that of the Queen in the rapid circles of the dance. Round after round they whirled in the mazy waltz—the music each instant increasing the rapidity of its movements, till Chicot's brain began to spin like the giddy measure he witnessed.

Suddenly the strains ceased.

"Now is my opportunity," exclaimed Chicot, preparing to dart forward.

At this moment he was arrested by a voice behind him. It was that of the King, with the arm of a masked maiden placed under his own.

"Follow me, compère," whispered the Monarch—"I have need of thy assistance. I shall require a mask and domino, and a hat with plumes, unlike those I am accustomed to wear, in which to disguise myself. Follow me."

"An instant, Sire,—"

"Not a second! Keep near me. I will not have thee quit my sight. Come, Demoiselle," added Henri, with a triumphant look

at his companion—"you shall now be satisfied of your lover's perfidy."

Chicot heard not the words. But he observed the Demoiselle tremble violently as the King dragged her on.

"Malediction!" mentally exclaimed he "Escape is now impossible! Crichton must take his chance."

CHAPTER XI.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS.

Ah ! que le temps est bien changé à celuy que quand on les voyoit danser tous deux en la grande salle du bal, d'une belle accordance, et de bonne volonté. Si l'un avoit belle majesté, l'autre ne l'avoit pas moindre.

BRANTÔME. *Dames Illustres : Dis. V.*

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, consort of Henri of Navarre, afterwards Henri IV. of France, was, at the period of our narrative, in the full éclat of her almost unrivalled beauty. Smitten by her nascent charms, Ronsard proclaimed her in her fifteenth spring, *La belle Charité Pasithée.* Nor was the appellation

unmerited. Some of her after-admirers—(we will not say flatterers, for with Marguerite truth itself took the language of flattery)—distinguished her by the title of Venus Urania; and we might have followed in their steps, had we not been fore-warned that such description—high-flown as it appears—was wholly inadequate to her matchless attractions. Hear what the Abbé de Brantome says on the subject:—"*encore croit-on*," writes he "*que, par l'advis de plusieurs, jamais Déesse ne fut veuë plus belle, si bien que pour publier ses beautez, ses mérites, et ses vertus, il faudroit que Dieu allongeast le monde, et haussast le ciel plus qu'il n'est!*"—and he concludes his panegyric by averring, that by her side all the goddesses of old, and empresses, such as we see them represented on the ancient medals, however pompously arrayed, would appear little better than chambermaids. No wonder when her chronicler sent this *eloge* for Marguerite's inspection she should return it, saying—"I would have praised you *more*, had you praised me *less*." Due allowance, however, being

made for the worthy Abbé's constitutional warmth of style, which carried him a little into extremes, no doubt can exist as to Marguerite's eminent personal attractions; and that she ranked as beautiful amongst the beautiful, even in the age that produced Mary Stuart, is likewise beyond question. The reader shall glance at her, and judge for himself.

Marguerite's eyes—(the eyes of a lovely woman are what we always look at first)—were large and dark, liquid, impassioned, voluptuous, with the fire of France, and the tenderness of Italy, in their beams. An anchorite could scarce have resisted their witchery. And then her features! How shall we give you a notion of their fascination? It was not their majesty—yet they were majestic as those of her mother—(grace, in fact, is more majestical than majesty's self, and Marguerite was eminently graceful)—it was not their regularity — yet they were regular as the severest judgment might exact, —it was not their tint—though Marguerite's

skin was dazzlingly fair,—it was that expression which resides not in form, and which, emanating from the soul, imparts, like the sun to the landscape, light, life, and loveliness. This indescribable expression constituted the charm of Marguerite's features.

The Queen of Navarre's figure was full and faultless; or, if it had a fault (which however would have been none with us) it might be deemed by those who think embonpoint incompatible with beauty, a little too redundant. But then if you complained of the Hebe-like proportion of her swelling shoulders, surely the slender waist from which those shoulders sprang would content you. The cestus of Venus would have spanned that waist; and *did* span it for aught we know—Marguerite's fascination indeed would almost warrant such a conclusion. Her throat was rounded and whiter than drifted snow—"*Jamais n'en fut veue,*" says her historian, "*une si belle, ny si blanche, si pleine, ny si charnue.*" Her hands—the true Medicis

hand—(Ronsard did well to liken them to the fingers of the young Aurora — rose-dyed, dew-steeped)—were the snowiest and smallest ever beheld—and we need scarcely inform the discriminating reader what sort of feet are sure to accompany such hands; nor of what sort of beauties such tiny feet give unerring evidence. Marguerite's feet, therefore, we need scarcely say, were those of a fairy, and the ankles that sustained them, fine and fairy-like as the feet.

Of her attire, which was gorgeous as her beauty—we dare scarcely hazard a description. We shrink beneath the perilous weight of its magnificence. Brilliants flamed like stars thick set amidst her dusky tresses. Besprent with pearls, her stomacher resembled a silvery coat of mail. Cloth of gold constituted her dress, the fashion of which was peculiar to herself; for it was remarked of her that she never appeared in the same garb twice; and that the costume in which she was seen the last, was that in which she appeared to the greatest advantage. Be this

as it may, upon the present occasion, she had studied to please—and she who pleased without study, could scarce fail to charm when it was her aim to do so. Around her fair throat hung a necklace of cameos, while in one hand *mignonnement engantelé*, as Rabelais hath it, she held a kerchief fringed with golden lace, and in the other a fan of no inconsiderable power of expansion.

In accomplishments, Marguerite might vie with any Queen on record. Gifted with the natural eloquence of her grandsire, François I., her own Memoirs amply testify her literary attainments—while her unpremeditated reply, in elegant latinity, to the Bishop of Cracovia, may be brought in evidence of the extent of her classical information, proving her no unworthy descendant, as she was the inheritress of the kingdom and of the name, of the amiable and virtuous Marguerite de Valois, spouse of Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, and authoress of the *Heptameron*, and of the *Miroir d'une ame Pécheresse*, and surnamed la Marguerite des Marguerites—

or pearl of pearls. Marguerite was the friend of the arts, and cultivator of poesy; and if her predecessor could boast of the friendship of Melancthon and Clement Marot, she was not less fortunate in the devotion of Ronsard and Brantôme, besides a host of minor luminaries. But if she had many friends and panegyrists, she had likewise numerous enemies and detractors; and to discover how busy scandal was with her reputation, we have only to turn to the pages of the *Divorce Satirique*, published under the name, and with the sanction of her husband, Henri IV.

Her life, a mixture of devotion and levity, presents one of those singular anomalies of which her sex have occasionally furnished examples; and which, without calling her sincerity in question—(for Marguerite though profligate, does not appear to have been a dissembler, like the rest of her family)—can only be reconciled upon such grounds as those on which the poet Shelley seeks to harmonize the enormities, and yet continuous prayers

and prostrations, of the ruthless Cenci. "Religion" (he acutely remarks, in his preface to the noble tragedy of that name,) "in a Catholic has no connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; *never a check.*" Marguerite, we have observed, was no hypocrite—her undisguised excesses attest the very reverse. With her, religion was a passion. One half of her existence was abandoned to a round of indulgences—the other to exercises of devotion, or to what would bear the name of devotion. She would hear three masses a day—*une haute, les deux autres petites**—would communicate thrice a week, and perform sundry acts of self-inflicted penance: but this inordinate zeal offered no interruption to her irregularities; on the

* Pasquier.

contrary, it appeared to lend piquancy to them. Satiated with amusement, she retired to pray with renovated fervour; and she issued from her oratory with a new appetite for sin.

With her after-sorrows we have no concern; nor with the darker period of her existence, when, in the touching words of the poetical jesuit, Lemoine, she became—

> *Épouse sans époux, et reine sans royaume;*
> *Vaine ombre du passé, grand et noble fantôme.*

Our business is with the brighter portion of her career—ere care had stricken her, or sorrow robbed her of a charm.

Of the grace and elegance of Marguerite de Valois in the dance, Brantôme has left us the most rapturous particulars. With lover-like enthusiasm he dilates upon her majestic carriage, and indescribable fascinations; and the vivid portrait he has taken of the lovely Queen (sketched at some such scene as that we are now attempting to describe) blooms, breathes, and stands before us in all its original beauty and freshness — a splendid

"phantom of delight," sparkling within that gallery of high-born dames and gallant cavaliers which he has preserved for the gaze of the world.

With Crichton's supremacy in the somewhat trifling, but then highly estimated art which

> Teacheth lavoltas high, and swift corantos,

with his perfect mastership of all its difficulties—(for in those days, when Italy, Spain, and Germany, and almost each province of France contributed their quota of figures and national peculiarities, the dance *had* its difficulties) with his unequalled possession of all its graces, the reader—aware of the universal scope of his accomplishments — must be already acquainted. He was accounted the most finished proficient in the dance at a court, each member of which would probably have been considered in the same important light in any other in Europe. Henri III. was passionately fond of the amusement, and largely indulged in it. In earlier days, Catherine de Medicis had been no less partial

to the dance, and Marguerite de Valois, as we know, held it in high esteem. All the courtiers, therefore, emulous of distinction in their Sovereign's eyes, bestowed unremitting attention upon this accomplishment, and it was no slight merit to eclipse in skill performers of such consummate ability. As in the hall of arms—as in the arena of learning—as in the tourney, the chace, or other exercises in which strength or dexterity is concerned — so in the ball-room Crichton outstripped all competitors. From the inimitable "constitution of his leg," it would seem, "that he was born under the star of a galliard." Terpsichore might have presided at his nativity.

It was Crichton's remarkable spirit, displayed in one of the wild and national dances of his own country, then little known, or regarded as semi-barbarian in the polite court of France, and perhaps seen there for the first time when he undertook it, that first attracted the attention of the Queen of Navarre towards him, and afterwards rivetted

her regards. With Crichton, it was indeed that poetry of motion—that inspiration of look and gesture (terms idly applied in these later days to the performances of the hired artist), called into play by the agency of the dance, and giving to that light and graceful pastime, its highest and most imaginative character. In him the dance was not a medium for the display of brilliant and faultless execution of paces, and flourishing of limb. His action — his *impersonation*, we might almost say, of the melody by which his movements were guided — was fanciful inspiriting, harmonious, as the melody itself. We question whether the pyrrhic, or enoplian dance of old, or hyporchematic measure (that exquisite admixture of motion and music, of lute and footstep) was ever executed with more fervour and inspiration, or produced more thrilling effects upon the beholders than Crichton's performances. The same ease—the same unconscious grace, which accompanied his demeanour on the parade, followed him in the volte, the bransle, or the paz-

zameno. In each, like mastery was exhibited —in each, were the various involutions required preserved; but, change the figure as often as he might, one *expression* pervaded all—in that expression, unattainable by other aspirants, resided his superiority.

Whether upon the present occasion, Crichton felt inspired by the presence and acclamations of the vast assemblage—the gaze of which he felt was fixed upon his efforts—or whether he was resolved to show how inexhaustible were his energies—we know not; but he appeared to surpass himself. Such was the lightness with which he bounded through the rapid Navarroise, (a species of waltz peculiar to the pleasant land from which it derived its name) that his foot scarcely seemed to touch the floor, or if it did alight upon it, it was only as Antæus acquired fresh vigour from his mother earth, to gain elasticity from the momentary contact. A movement so rapid and whirling as to have turned the heads of any less practised than the Admirable Scot and his royal partner,

brought the dance to a spirited and striking conclusion.

All etiquette was forgotten. An irrepressible excitement took possession of the spectators—*vivats* and *bravos* resounded on all sides—the burnished roof of the grand saloon re-echoed with the plaudits; and the effect produced upon the courtly throng by the brilliant achievements of the distinguished couple, seemed to be precisely similar to that which results from the most electrifying effects of the divinities of the ballet.

Never had Marguerite appeared so animated; even her dames of honour were surprised at her unusual elation.

"Mon-dieu! I have never seen her Majesty execute that dance with so much spirit since I first beheld it," said La Fosseuse, "when her partner was Henri of Navarre, and the occasion her own espousal."

"Her Majesty has all the air of a bride now," returned La Rebours, pensively. This fair Demoiselle, whom Marguerite in her Memoirs terms "*une fille malicieuse, que ne*

m'aimoit pas," became shortly afterwards the chief favourite of Henri of Navarre. It might be presentiment.

"Poh!" replied La Torigni, "I remember the night La Fosseuse speaks of well. By my reputation I have reason to do so. Henri of Navarre was a mere lump of rusty armour compared with the Chevalier Crichton, who vaults in the dance as if he had stolen the wings of Icarus. Nor does Madame Marguerite appear insensible to the change. *She* look like a bride! ma foi, you ought to know better, Demoiselle Rebours: even if she have it not, your bride is sure to affect a bashfulness, and you cannot lay any excess of that sort to Madame Marguerite's charge at the present moment."

"Why no," replied La Rebours, "not exactly; but Henri of Navarre makes a charming partner."

"As to the spirit with which she dances," continued the sprightly Torigni, "her nuptial ball was nothing to it. But what say you? *you* recollect that night, I dare say, Seigneur Abbé de Brantôme."

"Perfectly," replied Brantôme, with a significant glance—"*then* it was Mars, *now* Apollo and Venus are in conjunction."

While Marguerite de Valois remained panting within Crichton's arms, with one hand retained within his own, and her waist still encircled by the other—with her eyes, to the neglect of all observers, passionately fixed upon his gaze, a masked Cavalier, enveloped in a black domino, and wearing a hat surmounted with sable plumes, accompanied by a dame, whose features were concealed by a violet-coloured vizard, took up a position opposite to them.

"Do you note their looks? Do you mark their caressing hands?" asked the Cavalier of his companion.

"I do—I do," was her reply.

"Look again."

"My eyes dazzle—I can see no longer."

"You are satisfied, then?"

"Satisfied! oh—my head burns—my heart throbs almost to bursting—horrible emotions possess me. Heaven give me strength to con-

quer them—prove—prove him false—prove *that*—and—"

"Have I *not* proved it?—No matter; you shall hear him avow his perfidy with his own lips—shall behold him seal it with his kisses. Will that content you?

The maiden's reply, if her agitation permitted her to make any, was unheard in the bruit of a fresh strain of music, which struck up in answer to a wave of Du Halde's wand. The grave and somewhat grandoise character of the strain, announced an accompaniment to the Pavanne d'Espagne, a dance not inaptly named after the strutting bird of Juno, which had been recently introduced from the Court of Madrid into that of Paris, by the Ambassadors of Philip II., and which, in consequence of the preference entertained for it by Marguerite de Valois, was, notwithstanding that its solemn and stately pace harmonized more completely with the haughty carriage of the grandees of Spain than with the livelier bearing of the French Noblesse, now greatly in vogue amongst the latter.

La Pavanne d'Espagne which had some of the stiffness with more than the grace of the old *minuet de la cour*, (the delight of our grand-dames) presented a singular contrast to the national dance which preceded it. In the one, all was whirl, velocity, abandonment : in the other, dignity, formality, gravity. The first was calculated to display the spirit and energy of the performers ; the second, to exhibit such graces of person and majesty of deportment as they might chance to possess. In both was Crichton seen to advantage: in the latter eminently so.

As, in accordance with the haughty prelude to the figure—a slow martial strain, breathing of the proud minstrelsy of Old Castile, interrupted at intervals by the hollow roll of the Moorish atabal—he drew his lofty person to its utmost height, his eyes the while blazing with chivalrous fire, awakened by the vaunting melody, and his noble features lighted up with a kindred expression, the beholder might well have imagined that in him he beheld some glorious descendant of the Cid, or mighty

inheritor of the honours of the renowned Pelayo.

Advancing towards the Queen of Navarre, with a grave and profound salutation, he appeared to solicit the honour of her hand, to which courteous request, Marguerite, who, for the nonce, assumed all the hauteur and august coquetry of an Infanta of the blood royal, disdainfully answered by conceding him the tips of those lovely fingers which Ronsard had likened, as the reader knows, to the rosy digits of the daughter of the dawn. Here began that slow and stately procession from which the dance obtained its designation, and in which its chief grace consisted. Hand in hand they sailed down the salon

Like two companion barks on Cydnus' wave:

a prouder couple never graced those festal halls. With a pace majestic as that of a king about to receive the crown of his ancestry, did Crichton pursue his course. Murmurs of admiration marked his steps.

Nor was Marguerite de Valois without her

share of admiration, though our gallantry may be called into question, if we confess that the meed of applause was chiefly bestowed on Crichton. With the fair Queen of Navarre, we have observed, this dance was an especial favourite; and justly so, for it was the one in which she most excelled. In its slow measure, the spectator had full leisure to contemplate the gorgeous majesty and resplendent loveliness of her person; in its pauses, her surpassing dignity and queenly grace were brought into play; in its gayer passages—for even this grave dance had a pleasant admixture of spirit (the sunshine stolen from its clime)—her animation and fire were shown; while in its haughtier movements, was manifested the fine disdain she knew so well how to express.

"By Apollo!" exclaimed Ronsard as soon as the vivats, which followed the conclusion of the Pavanne, had died away, "the whole scene we have just witnessed reminds me of one of those old and golden legends wherein we read how valour is assailed by sorcery—

and how the good knight is for a time spell-bound by the enthralling enchantress."

"Certes, la bella Alcina was but a prototype of Marguerite," said Brantôme.

"And Orlando of Crichton," added La Torigni.

"Or Rinaldo," continued La Fosseuse, "he is the very mirror of chivalry."

"He must have more skill than Ulysses to break the snares of his Circe," whispered Ronsard.

"True," replied Brantôme, in the same tone. "It was not without good reason that Don Juan of Austria said to me when he first beheld her peerless charms:—'Inasmuch as your Queen's beauty is more divine than human, by so much is she the more likely to drag men to perdition than to save them!'" —Turning then to the maids of honour the Abbé added aloud — "The mistake in all matters of enchantment appears to be, that your knight-errant should ever desire to burst such agreeable bondage. To me it would be like awakening from a pleasant dream. Ah!

were there some good fairy left who would tempt me—you should see whether I would resist, or seek to be disenchanted!"

"Well, of all agreeable divertisements commend me to the bransle," said La Torigni, as that figure was struck up.

"Apropos of temptation, I suppose," said Brantôme; "for *you* never look so captivating as when engaged in it, Signora Torigni. For my part I envy the Chevalier Crichton his success in the dance more than his *bonnes fortunes*. I never could accomplish a *pas*."

"A *faux pas* I suppose you mean, Abbé," whispered Ronsard.

"Indeed!" returned La Torigni. "Suppose you take a lesson now. What say you to a turn in the bransle? That is the easiest figure of all. Our royal mistress has disappeared with her Admirable Scot, so my attendance will be dispensed with for the present. We shall be free from interruption. Never mind your being a little lame — the bransle is the best specific in the world for the

rheumatism. Come along. Monsieur de Ronsard, your gout I know will not permit you, or I would bid you give your hand to La Fosseuse. But you can at least amuse her with a *mot*, or, perhaps improvise an ode for her entertainment, upon the pretty sight we have just witnessed; and the more you stuff it with loves and doves, kisses and blisses, gods, goddesses, and heroes, till like a cup of hydromel it overflows with sweetness, the better she will like it. Your hand, Seigneur l'Abbé—"

And, despite his remonstrances, the laughing Florentine dragged the reluctant Brantôme to the bransle.

Slowly, meanwhile, glided along Crichton and the Queen of Navarre. Neither spoke — neither regarded the other — the bosoms of both were too full; Marguerite's of intense passion; Crichton's of what emotion it boots not to conjecture. He felt the pressure of her arm upon his own—he felt the throbbing of her breast against his elbow, but he returned not the pressure, neither did his heart respond to those ardent pulsations. A sudden

sadness seemed to overspread his features; and thus in silence did they wander along, inhaling new clouds of flattering incense from each worshipping group they passed.

Their steps were followed at a wary distance by three other masks--a circumstance which escaped their notice. Marguerite thought of nothing save her lover, and Crichton's mind was otherwise occupied.

Anon they entered a small antichamber opening from the vestibule of the hall of entrance.

This room, filled with the choicest exotics, and hung around with cages containing squirrels, parrots and other gaily plumaged birds (of which Henri was immoderately fond), was for the moment deserted, even of the customary lacqueys in attendance, and loiterers about such places.

Marguerite glanced cautiously around her, and, seeing the room vacant, applied a small golden key which she took from her girdle, to a concealed door, in the side wall. The valve yielded to the touch— thick tapestry

then appeared, which, being raised, the pair found themselves within a dim-lighted chamber, the atmosphere of which struck upon their senses, as they entered, warmly and odoriferously.

A prie-dieu, cushioned with velvet, stood at the further end of the apartment. Before it was placed a golden crucifix. Over the crucifix hung a Madonna, by Raphael; the glowing colouring of which divine picture was scarcely discernible by the faint light of the two perfume-distilling lamps suspended on either side. This room was the oratory of the Queen of Navarre.

Scarcely had the lovers gained this retreat when the valve was opened noiselessly behind them—again as cautiously closed—and three persons, who had thus stealthily obtained admission to the chamber, posted themselves in silence behind the tapestry, the folds of which being slightly drawn aside, enabled them to discern whatever might be passing within the oratory.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ORATORY.

Marie. Tu es jeune, il y a beaucoup de belles femmes qui te regardent fort doucement, je le sais. Enfin, on se lasse d'une Reine comme d' une autre.—

VICTOR HUGO. *Marie Tudor.*

"CRICHTON, mon beau Chevalier," exclaimed Marguerite de Valois, raising her beautiful head, and gazing fondly and inquiringly into his face, "why are you thus silent and pre-occupied? Amid the prying assemblage we have quitted—with all eyes upon us, and all ears eager to catch our lightest whisper—it were well to observe

such caution. *Here*, alone, unheard, unseen, this reserve is needless. Is it that your quarrel with the Queen, my mother, gives you uneasiness? I cautioned you not to arouse her anger. You were wilful, and would not listen to my entreaties. Catherine de Medicis *is* an enemy to be feared. But you need have no fear of her.—Dread not her poignards—her poisons. I will watch over your safety, and arrest the secret steel should she point it at your breast. I will provide an antidote against the infected chalice should its venom touch your lips. Be not afraid."

"I am not, Marguerite. I will trust to my own arm for deliverance from your mother's assassins, while for preservation from her poisons I am content to rely upon forbearance from her banquets."

"That were a vain precaution. The scarf you wear—the flower you smell—the very atmosphere you breathe may become the agent of death. Even *I* might be the instrument of her vengeance."

"You, Marguerite, a poisoner!"

"Unconsciously. But you should not fall alone. I will save you, or share your fate."

"How can I repay this devotion?" replied Crichton, in a tone as if he struggled with some deep and suppressed emotion. "I am unworthy of this solicitude. Believe me, I have no fears for my own safety—no dread of poisons be they subtle as those of Parysades, or Locusta. I possess an assured safeguard against their baneful effects."

"So thought Bernardo Girolamo, yet he perished by the drugs of Cosmo de Medicis. His was a light offence compared with yours.—A remedy *does* exist—a counter-poison. Henri and I alone possess it. I have sworn to use it only for the preservation of my own existence. You are my existence.—You shall have the phial."

"You shall not break your vow, my gracious Queen.—Nay, I am resolute in this. For me, I repeat, your mother's wrath has no terrors. If it be the will of Heaven that I must fall by the assassin's

dagger, or by more secret means, I shall not shrink from my fate, but meet it as beseems a brave man. My destiny, however, I feel is not yet fulfilled. Much remains to be accomplished. My aspirations—my energies—all tend towards one great end. Fate may crown me with success, or it may crush me in the outset of my career. I can have no fore-knowledge, though your mother's starry lore would tell you otherwise—nor, it may be, free-agency. No matter! *My* aim is fixed—and thus much of the future, methinks I can read—I shall not perish by the hand of Catherine de Medicis."

"Is not your destiny accomplished, Crichton?—are not your brows bound with laurels?—have you not this day achieved more than man ever achieved before you?—Are you not girt with honourable knighthood?—what more remains to be performed?"

"Much—much."

"Have you not my love—my devotion—a *Queen's* idolatry, Crichton? You are insatiate in your ambition, Monseigneur."

"I *am* insatiate—or how should my desires extend beyond this moment?"

"Crichton, you no longer love me. Beware—beware. I love you fervently. But I can hate in the same degree. I am by nature jealous. The Medicis' blood within my veins, fires me to love with desperation, or to resent as strongly. As yet I only love. If I discover aught to confirm my suspicions—if I find that you have breathed words of passion to another, my rival dies, though her destruction cost me my kingdom—that which I hold dearer than my kingdom—yourself. I am a Queen, and, if I am wronged, will have a Queen's revenge."

"Why this sudden frenzy, Marguerite?—whose rivalry do you apprehend?"

"I know not. I would not know. I look around in dread. At the fête I am beset with fears—*here* I am assailed with new agonies. My life is one long pang of jealousy.—Have I a rival, Crichton?—Answer me—Oh! if I have one, let her avoid my presence."

"Calm yourself, my Queen.—Banish these idle fancies—"

"*Are* they fancies, Crichton?—*are* they idle? Methinks I feel my rival's presence within this chamber—here—here."

"Shall I chide or smile at your folly, my Queen—"

"Could she behold us *now*—what must be her thoughts—?"

"You are not wont to be thus suspicious, Marguerite."

"Again I ask you are my suspicions groundless? Call to mind your attentions to the Demoiselle, Esclairmonde—were they not sufficient to awaken doubts as to your sincerity to me? Oh Crichton! I have been anxious—miserable, since that night. Our Lady be praised, I am easier now."

"Right—right, sweet Marguerite. But, as you *have* alluded to her, may I, without reviving your apprehensions, inquire whether Esclairmonde is at the fête to-night?"

"She is," replied Marguerite, with a smile.

"I did not observe her," said Crichton, with affected indifference.

"Yet she was at no great distance from you."

"With the Queen your mother?"

"With the King my brother."

"With HIM!!" ejaculated Crichton.

"She stood by Henri's side when he bestowed this decoration of the Saint-Esprit upon you."

"The violet mask!"

"You have guessed shrewdly."

"And she remained with the King when we quitted the grand salon!"

Despite his efforts to control himself, Crichton was unable to conceal his emotion. With sarcastic levity Marguerite replied to his question.

"She *did* remain with him—and thereby hangs a story. Esclairmonde, I must inform you, has, upon her presentation to-night achieved a conquest no less important than that of his Majesty. He is evidently enthralled by her; and (jealousy apart!) it

must be owned she is sufficiently charming to warrant his sudden fascination. With Henri it was decidedly love at first sight, which, ridicule it as one may, is the only true love after all. It was at first sight that I loved you, Crichton. Since she tendered her hand to the King, he has never quitted it; and, to judge from appearances, he has already made no inconsiderable progress in her affections."

"Already?" interrupted Crichton.

"She will have the post of honour at the banquet," continued Marguerite—and will be henceforth the reigning favourite, with power absolute over all the court. To speak truth, I am not sorry for it, as it nips a rival in the bud, though the Queen, my mother, who, I suspect, had other intentions with the Demoiselle, may not entirely approve of the arrangement."

"And the King loves her?" exclaimed Crichton.

"I have not seen him so desperately enamoured since his two grand passions, la belle

Châteauneuf, and Marie de Clèves. Esclairmonde bids fair, I assure you, to eclipse both her predecessors."

"Marguerite, I implore of you to return to the fête."

"Crichton, you love this girl," said Marguerite, coldly.

"I would save her from dishonour. Hear me, Marguerite!—Amid the tainted atmosphere of this court, one pure fair flower blooms and is seen for a moment—the next, a rude hand grasps it—scatters its fragrance to the wind—and levels it with the weeds that grow rife around it.—Esclairmonde is that flower—save her from the spoiler's hand.—Have pity on her youth—her innocence. She is unfriended—alone. Be to her a preserver, my gracious Queen. You know what Henri's love is—that he spares nought to gratify his desires. Save her—save her!"

"To bless yourself withal—never—"

"Mistake me not—let not your jealousy confound my apprehension for her safety with other feelings, which, even if I entertained

them, would weigh little with me in comparison with my anxiety for her preservation."

"I am sure you love her. Now hear *me* Crichton. My husband, Henri of Navarre, demands my presence. This morn, the Baron de Rosin arrived from the camp at Pau. My reply depends on you. Will you form one of my escort? — Say that you will do so, and I will be myself the bearer of my answer."

"Marguerite, to what end should I go thither. I respect the bravery of Henri of Navarre—I admire his chivalrous character, his bonhomie, his frankness. But having pledged myself to your royal brother's cause, how can I enlist under hostile banners, how can I take up arms against the religion I profess—against the sovereign I have sworn to serve. I cannot quit the court of France."

"Do not equivocate, messire—you cannot quit your minion Esclairmonde—you refuse to accompany me."

"Torture me not thus, Marguerite—for

pity's sake, if you will not go with me to the fête, suffer me to return alone."

"Go."

"Marguerite, farewell. I quit you but for an instant."

"For ever. This valediction is eternal, Chevalier Crichton.—"

"For ever! — Marguerite — did I hear aright?"

"Stay!" cried the Queen, after a momentary but fearful struggle with herself—"Stay, I command—entreat you—return not to the fête. Have pity on *me*, Crichton."

"This delay is cruel—even now I may be too late to warn her of her danger. Henri may triumph if I tarry longer. Marguerite, I take my leave."

"It *is* true!" exclaimed Marguerite, with a look of unutterable agony—"my frightful suspicions are confirmed. You have never loved me—ingrate—deceiver—never—never."

Crichton would have spoken. Marguerite, however, impetuously interrupted him.

"Do not forswear yourself, messire. You

cannot deceive me longer. Ah, Crichton!—Is it possible you can have forgotten—or that you are willing to forget—my tenderness? Is it possible? but I will no longer indulge this weakness—leave me—go—go!"

Crichton appeared irresolute. Marguerite continued in the same vehement tone.—"Dare not to approach your minion Esclairmonde—dare not, as you value her life, breathe aught of love or counsel within her ear—for, by my hope of heaven, if you do so — she survives not the night. Now, you are at liberty to depart—yet stay, you shall not hence alone. After what I have said, I shall be curious to see how you will attempt to succour this distressed damsel."

"Par la Mort Dieu! my sister, you shall not go far to witness it," said Henri, thrusting aside the tapestry, and dragging Esclairmonde forward. "Your own appointment, you perceive, has not been without witnesses."

"Henri!" ejaculated Marguerite, so soon as she recovered her surprise.

"Esclairmonde!" exclaimed Crichton, recoiling in astonishment and displeasure.

A momentary pause ensued, during which each party regarded the other in doubt and silence. We attempt not to portray the emotions which agitated each bosom. The King alone appeared easy and unconcerned. He was at home in scenes like the present, and hummed laughingly a light air of the day.

Crichton at length spoke.

"Is it customary, Sire," said he, in a tone of irony, "with the kings of France to play the eves-dropper? I have heard of such practices in Arabian story, but the incident is new to the annals of your realm."

"Certes, when they have as good a chance of being repaid for their trouble as I have," replied Henri gaily. "In love and war all stratagems are fair; and I have the sanction of precept and custom, if I cared for either, for my conduct. All that I desired to do was to satisfy the Demoiselle Esclairmonde of what she terms your perfidy, and to that end we brought her hither. Yon

arras afforded us an excellent screen—not a word of your tête-à-tête, or of our sister's reproaches escaped us. I thank you for your good opinion of myself—I thank you for your kind intentions towards the Demoiselle Esclairmonde, which she holds entirely needless—and I thank you still more for proving yourself so satisfactorily the inconstant she conceived you to be. Voilà tout, Chevalier!"

"I congratulate your Majesty upon your address," returned Crichton. "Few scruples appear to stand in the way of your inclinations."

"Pardieu! compère!" exclaimed Chicot, who formed part of the group, and who, with difficulty, had hitherto restrained himself from interference—"our gossip, Henri, is too great a king not to be exempt from vulgar weaknesses. Delicacy has never been classed amongst his foibles."

"And you, Esclairmonde," said Crichton, somewhat reproachfully—"you have condescended to this——"

"Meanness, you would say," interrupted

Marguerite, scornfully. "Give your minion's conduct its proper term—none else will suit it. My heart told me she was beside us. The instinct of hate never deceives."

"You have, then, overheard our converse, Demoiselle?" said Crichton.

"I have," replied Esclairmonde, blushing deeply.

"And you are aware of the peril in which you stand," added Crichton, looking significantly at Henri, as he spoke. "One step more and all is irretrievable."

"I know it," replied Esclairmonde, distractedly.

"Hear me!" continued Crichton, with an imploring look.

"Traitor to both!" muttered Marguerite—"be warned yourself—a word will seal her fate."

Crichton heeded neither Marguerite's whispered threats, nor the King's glances of displeasure.

"Esclairmonde!" persisted he in the same

ardent tone, "by all that is sacred in your regards, I conjure you listen to my counsels. Pause—reflect—or you are lost for ever."

"Tête et sang! there is something of the Huguenot about you after all, my dear Crichton," said the King, in a satirical tone. "You preach in a style worthy of the staunchest Anabaptist or Antinomian of them all, and not like the easy galliard we have hitherto supposed you. Our mignonne Esclairmonde is infinitely indebted to you for your agreeable diatribe. But she has had ample time for reflection behind yon arras, and her choice is made. The Demoiselle prefers a royal lover with a heart, a court, rank, title, power, almost the half of a throne to offer her, to one who has none of these requisites, not even an undivided heart to bestow. Are you answered, messire?"

"Esclairmonde!" exclaimed Crichton.

"Beware! insensate madman," cried Marguerite.

"Crichton!" exclaimed Esclairmonde, sud-

denly extricating herself from the King's grasp, and throwing herself into his arms. "To your protection I commit myself."

"And with my life I will defend you," returned Crichton, clasping her to his bosom.

"I tremble no longer to avow my love. I am yours for ever. I will brave all. We can at least die together!" exclaimed Esclairmonde

"It were bliss to do so," answered Crichton.

"Malediction!" exclaimed the King — "Chicot, our guard."

The Jester reluctantly quitted the oratory.

"Be your wish gratified," exclaimed Marguerite, in a tone of bitter derision. "Perish together, since you wish it. Henri, I crave a boon from you."

"What boon, my sister?"

"This boon," replied Marguerite, kindling into fury as she spoke: "that the work of vengeance may be entrusted to my hands; that I, who have witnessed their transports, may witness also their pangs. I must have blood, my brother—blood--*his* blood! Call

in the guard. Leave me alone with them. I will see it done. By Jesus! it will gladden me to see a sword drawn."

"I doubt it not, sweet sister," replied Henri, who had now resumed all the indifference he had previously exhibited. "Du Guast's epitaph bears witness of your taste for bloodshed. If I should need an executioner, I pledge myself to call in your aid. But, nor block, nor sword, nor poignard, will, I think, be required upon this occasion. A word will recall the Chevalier Crichton to his senses."

"The *sword* were best," replied Marguerite, fiercely. "Be it as you please. My own particular wrong shall not pass unavenged."

"Chevalier Crichton," said Henri, advancing toward the Scot, and fixing a steadfast glance upon him, addressing him at the same time in a tone of high and prince-like courtesy, "need I remind you of your voluntary proffer of obedience to my mandates? The time is arrived when I hold it fitting to claim fulfilment of your pledge."

"Dispose of my life, Sire."

"What is more dear than life?"

"Ha!"

"You have sworn upon your sword to refuse me nothing."

"What do you demand, Sire?"

"Possession of this damsel."

"Crichton!" shrieked Esclairmonde, clinging more closely to her lover, "kill me rather than yield me to him."

"I have his word," said Henri, coldly.

"He has!—he has!" exclaimed Crichton, in accents of desperation. "Take back your title—take back your honours, Sire, if they are to be bought by this sacrifice. Take my life—my blood — though it flow drop by drop —but do not extort fulfilment of a rash promise, which, if you claim, you pronounce a sentence upon two heads far more terrible than death!"

"I am then to understand, messire," returned Henri, scornfully regarding him, "that your word being rashly plighted, is

not held binding on your conscience. 'Tis well. I now know how to proceed."

"Would you have me break these clinging arms, and hurl her senseless at your feet? Call your guards, Sire, and let them unloose her clasp. I will not oppose your mandate."

"'Twere better to do so," said Marguerite, "or I will stab the minion in his arms."

"Peace," cried Henri, "she relents even now."

"Crichton your word is past," said Esclairmonde, "you cannot protect me."

"My arm is paralysed," replied her lover, in a tone of anguish.

"When that vow was uttered," continued Esclairmonde, with dreadful calmness, "I shuddered for its consequences. Nor was I deceived. Who would place his dagger in the assassin's hand, and hope for mercy? He to whom you pledged your knightly word exacts its fulfilment—and well I know he is inexorable. Obedience is all that remains: and that you may, without remorse, obey him,

I will voluntarily surrender myself. Seek not to detain me. I am no longer yours. When that oath escaped your lips, you renounced me. Think of me no more. You must not think of me, Crichton; and I command by the love you have professed for me—I beseech you not to attempt my rescue."

"Said I not she relented," exclaimed Henri, triumphantly taking her hand.—"As to you, Chevalier Crichton, I am really sorry for your disappointment. But I trust our Saint Esprit, will, in some degree, content you for the loss of your mistress."

"Well has it been said—place no faith in princes!" exclaimed Crichton, tearing the jewelled badge from his throat, and trampling it beneath his feet: "their gifts, like that of Nessus, are bestowed only to destroy. Perish these accursed chains that fetter my soul's freedom—and with them perish all sense of obligation."

"Grand merci!" rejoined Henri, coldly. "My favours must be of little worth if they can be thus readily set aside, but I shall take

no offence at your want of temper. A minute's reflection will see you calmer. Your Scots are apt to be hot-headed I have heard, and I now experience the truth of the assertion. I make every excuse for you. Your situation *is* mortifying. But give yourself no further uneasiness, we will answer for the Demoiselle's safety."

"Will you answer for her honour, Sire?" asked Crichton, bitterly.

"Allons!" replied Henri, with great nonchalance, "to the banquet."

Saying which he applied a silver whistle to his lips. At the call, the valve was suddenly thrown open—the tapestry drawn aside—and through the door appeared the antichamber full of lights, with a file of valets and halberdiers arranged on either side of the entrance. At the same moment Chicot entered the oratory.

A peculiar smile played on Henri's features.

"For what do we tarry?" asked he, glancing exultingly at Crichton.

"For my guidance, I conclude," replied

Chicot, stepping forward; "nothing but Folly will serve to direct your Majesty's course."

"Méchant," exclaimed Henri. And passing Esclairmonde's arm within his own, he quitted the apartment.

Crichton stood for some moments like one suddenly stunned—with his face buried in his hands. He was aroused by a light touch upon the shoulder.

"Marguerite," exclaimed he, returning the gaze of the Queen of Navarre, with a terrible look, "why remain you here? Is not your vengeance complete? You have sacrificed innocence, virtue, pure affection, at the shrine of depravity and lust. Are you not content? Do you remain to taunt me—or do you pant for my blood? Take this dagger and plunge it to my heart."

"No, Crichton," returned Marguerite de Valois, "I will have nobler vengeance. What if I liberate this maiden from her thraldom?"

"Amazement!"

"What if I free her from Henri's snares?

"My gratitude—my life—"

"Will not suffice."

"Boundless devotion—"

"More—your love."

"Ask what I *can* give—ask not *that!*"

"You abandon her, then? Forget you where she is — and within whose power? forget you Henri's orgies—forget you those unlicensed scenes so fatal to the honour of our sex?"

"Marguerite no more—I am yours."

"Swear, if I do this, that you will no more approach this damsel as a lover—swear this by the Virgin who regards us,"—and as she proposed the adjuration, Marguerite extended her hand towards the Madonna. "Swear! and I am content."

Scarcely were the words pronounced when Chicot appeared at the valve.

"The King commands your instant presence at the banquet," said he, almost breathless with haste.

"Hence!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"Her Majesty, the Queen-Mother—" added the Jester, in an under-tone.

And as he spoke, Catherine de Medicis abruptly entered the oratory.

"Daughter," said Catherine, "I have sought you throughout the grand salon. Why do we find you here — and thus attended?"

"Madame!" interposed Marguerite.

"I would speak with you alone—dismiss this gentleman," continued Catherine, glancing haughtily at Crichton.

"Leave us, Chevalier Crichton," said Marguerite, and she added in a lower tone; "remember what I have said."

Crichton had scarcely gained the antichamber when he perceived Chicot. A few hasty words passed between them.

"And thou apprehendest the enlèvement of the Gelosa?" said Crichton. — "The guard report, thou sayest, that the Hôtel de Soissons has been invested by an armed band requiring her deliverance to them.

Difficulties multiply. No matter. I would be equal to any emergency. Where is the Mask?"

"As well might you pick out a domino in carnival time as discern him amidst yon crowd of revellers. No one noted his approach, nor did any one, that I can learn, witness his departure. For my part," added Chicot, pointing downwards, "I think he disappeared as another sable cavalier is said to be in the habit of doing. Were I you, gossip, I would have my sword blessed by some holy priest ere I ventured to engage with him on the morrow, or carry an Agnus Dei, or some other sacred relic beneath my pourpoint."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Crichton. "He is a mere mortal foe. Hence, good gossip—to the banquet-hall—account for my absence in the best way thou canst to his Majesty. I will be there anon."

"Make yourself easy on that score, gossip. I will divert his inquiries. But when you *do*

appear at the banquet, bear in mind what I said respecting Catherine's kind intentions towards you."

"I shall not fail to do so. And, in the meantime, rest largely indebted to thy zeal."

"Why did you decline the counter-poison, gossip? You may need it."

"'Tis too late to regret my inadvertence. I must trust to my own precautions. Besides I have other designs—"

And without concluding his speech, Crichton darted from the antichamber.

Chicot looked after him an instant, and shook his head.

"Sang de cabres!" muttered he, "it has turned out precisely as I anticipated. No good ever comes of making love to two women at the same time, especially when one of the twain happens to be a Queen. Not content with this, this galliard, forsooth, must saddle himself with a third. After all, Marguerite's jealousy is absurd. She has already had lovers enough to con-

tent an Isabel de Bavière, or a Marguerite de Bourgogne. What says our chronicle?—

Marguerite.*

MARGUERITE, with early wiles—
Marguerite
On light Charins and D'Antragues smiles—†
Margot, Marguerite.

Older grown, she favours then,
Smooth Martigues,‡ and bluff Turenne.
The latter but a foolish *pas*,
Margot, Marguerite *en bas!* §

But no more these galliards please,
Marguerite!
Softly sues the gallant Guise,
Margot, Marguerite!
Guise succeeds, like God of war,
Valiant Henri of Navarre;
Better stop, than further go,
Margot, Marguerite *en haut!*

II.

Loudly next bewails La Mole,‖
Marguerite,
On the block his head must roll,
Margot, Marguerite.

* A catalogue of Marguerite's various amourettes will be found in the *Divorce Satirique*, published under the auspices of her consort, Henri IV.

† Marguerite was then of the tender age of eleven.

‡ Colonel-General of the French infantry. Brantôme has written his *éloge*

§ This refrain is attributed to the Duchesse de Guise.

‖ The Sieur La Mole, surnamed '*Le Baladin de la cour*;' beheaded by Charles IX., it is said from jealousy. *Mollis vita, Mollior interitus.*

Soon consoles herself again,
With Brantôme, Bussi,* and Mayenne,†
Boon companion *gros et gras*
Margot, Marguerite, *en bas !*

Who shall next your shrine adore,
Marguerite?
You have but one lover more,
Margot, Marguerite!
Crichton comes—the *preux*, the wise,
You may well your conquest prize;
Beyond *him* you cannot go,
Margot, Marguerite *en haut !*

Chanting these libellous strains as he went, Chicot slowly sought the banquet-hall.

Scarcely another moment elapsed when Catherine de Medicis, and the Queen of Navarre, issued from the oratory. The features of the latter were pale as death, and their expression was utterly unlike that which they habitually wore. Catherine was unmoved, majestical, terrible.

"Must this indeed be so, mother?" asked Marguerite in a broken voice.

"It *must*," replied Catherine with deep

* Bussi D'Amboise.—*Formosæ Veneris furiosi Martis alumnus.*
† The Duc de Mayenne, brother to the Duc de Guise.

emphasis on the word, "Henri will, no doubt, as he is wont, carouse till dawn. By that time the draught will have done its duty. If Crichton survive, Maurevert and his band, which will await his coming forth from the Louvre, will complete the work. Shrink not from thy task. Our honour is at stake."

The two Queens separated. Catherine rejoined her attendants, and took the direction of the hall of entrance. Marguerite almost mechanically returned to the grand salon.

As Catherine pursued her course she perceived a masked figure single itself from the crowd at her approach. Its stature was that of Crichton's challenger; its plumes were like those he wore; its sable cloak appeared the same. Catherine paused. The figure paused likewise.

"'Tis he!"—thought the Queen-mother, and she despatched one of her pages to bid him to her presence.

"What would your highness with me?" said the Mask, advancing with a profound

and courtly salutation, and addressing Catherine in Italian.

"I was not deceived," thought Catherine; "it *is* the voice. I have sent for you Signore," added she in a bland and gracious tone, and addressing the Mask in the language he had adopted, "in order to express to you, ere I quit the fête, the lively sense of gratitude I entertain for the important service you have rendered me. Assure yourself, Signore, your zeal shall not be overlooked I am neither unwilling as, Heaven be praised, I am not wholly unable, to requite it."

"Were your Majesty aware of the nature of the service I have rendered you, you would scarcely deem it deserving of your thanks," replied the Mask.

"Do you rate your adversary thus lightly then?" asked Catherine complaisantly.

"I hold myself assured of conquest," returned the Mask.

"The migniard Crichton dupes himself with like belief," rejoined the Queen-mother, "but not with like assurance of success.

The God of battles, I trust, will grant you victory, and enable you to overthrow your enemy."

"Amen!" returned the Mask.

"Fall back, messieurs," said Catherine to her attendants—"I have much of moment to yourself to communicate, monseigneur," added she, assuming a more confidential manner.

"Touching the Gelosa?" enquired the Mask, anxiously.

"Non può bene deliberar chi non è libero," replied Catherine, "I am about to return to my palace. You must not accompany me; nor quit the revel at the same time. Too much caution cannot be observed. The palaces of princes are all eyes—all ears."

"Your glove, Madame," interrupted the Mask, stooping to raise the richly embroidered gauntlet which Catherine let fall, as if by accident.

"Keep it," replied the Queen-mother, smiling, "within its folds you will find a key, the use of which I am about to dis-

close to you. That glove, I may premise, displayed upon your cap, will obtain you admission to the Hôtel de Soissons. Exchange no words with the attendants—but pursue your way alone. Enter the gallery. Within a niche you will observe three statues. The central figure, that of our Sire, Lorenzo de Medicis, Duke of Urbino, revolves upon a pivot. Touch the spear within its grasp and you will perceive a subterranean passage leading to our turret of observation. Apply the key we have given you to a door which will impede your further progress, and you will find yourself in Ruggieri's laboratory. An hour hence I shall expect you there."

"And the Gelosa?"

"She is in safety."

"With Ruggieri?"

"With Catherine de Medicis. She is in my charge. Crichton's idle boast I see weighs with you. But trust me, neither force nor stratagem will gain him entrance to our tower. Santa Maria! so easy do I feel on

that score that I will give him the girl if he find means to reach her prison."

"He has adventured there already Madame," returned the Mask, eagerly, "and should he take you at your word would you part with your charge upon such easy terms?"

Catherine smiled.

"Your Majesty would almost appear to favour your enemy's designs," continued the Mask, jestingly.

"Non per amor ma per vendetta," returned Catherine, in the same tone. "Crichton will never more adventure there, Signore, unless," added she, smiling, "he should come thither under *your* guidance. You shall know more of his destiny an hour hence. Meanwhile, I must conclude our interview—we are observed. The banquet, too, awaits you. One caution in parting I bequeath you. Henri holds his revels late, and it is often his custom to detain his guests. Should he issue his command to close the doors of the

oval chamber, you will find beneath the suit of hangings which represents Diana and her nymphs, a sliding door."

"I understand your Majesty."

"A rivedersi, monsignore."

"I kiss your Majesty's hand," replied the Mask, with a profound obeisance.

The figure then mingled with a group of revellers who approached them, and who were joyously hurrying towards the grand hall of banquet: while Catherine, ushered forth by a concourse of pages and lacqueys, entered her sumptuous litter, and departed from the Louvre.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ORGIE.

Maffio. Oh! l'on conte des choses bien étranges de ces soupers de Borgia!

Ascanio. Ce sont des débauches effrénées, assaissonnées d' empoisonnemens.

VICTOR HUGO. *Lucrèce Borgia.*

THE thick folds of the magnificent crimson hangings, heightened with arabesques and fleur-de-lys of gold, which served in lieu of folding doors to separate the chief banquetting hall from the grand salon, had meanwhile, at a signal from the major-domo, been drawn aside; and the long and glittering board, arrayed with all the costly appliances of the royal feast, was suddenly exhibited to

the view of the assemblage. The coup d'œil was charming. Far as the eye could reach appeared walls festooned with flowers fragrant and blooming, as if the season had been latest spring. Mirrors, wreathed with Provençal roses, reflected the lustre of a thousand flambeaux, and multiplied the gleaming plate and star-like crystal with which the board was loaded. The object on which the eye chiefly rested—not merely because it was the principal feature of attraction to the expectant guests, but by reason of its proud pre-eminence—was the table itself. It was a fitting place for the celebration of the combined rites of Ceres and Bacchus. Reared upon a massive platform—six feet at least above the floor; approached by a triple flight of steps; covered, both as to its mimic stairs and summit, with cloths of dazzling whiteness (*fort mignonnement damassé*, as we learn from a contemporary authority)—this mighty table, extending the whole length of the vast hall, looked like

a mountain of snow, or perhaps, to vary the simile, like a prodigious frosted cake baked in the oven of Gargantua by the skilful *Fouaciers de Lerné*, the culminating point of which cake or mountain was formed by a cloudy representation of Olympus, in which Henri and his favourites figured as presiding divinities. A nearer approach to the table showed that the surface of its damask covering was, according to the fashion of the court, ribbed in fanciful and waving plaits, so as to resemble the current of a stream crisped by a passing breeze. This stream bore upon its bosom a proud array of argent and golden vases, crystal goblets, urns, and cups, all of rarest workmanship, and many wrought by the hand of the matchless Benvenuto Cellini during his visit to Francis the First at Fontainebleau. In the words of brave Ben Jonson there were

> Dishes of agate set in gold, and studded
> With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.

Nothing could exceed the gorgeous and regal magnificence of the repast. The material of the feast was worthy of Apicius or Lucullus. Every dainty that the most consummate epicure of 1579 (an era by no means despicable, as we shall presently have occasion to show, in the annals of gastronomy) could require, was to be met with in profusion. Fancy ran riot amid the countless covers, and the endless varieties of piquant viands, which were displayed on their removal. Pyramids of confectionary—piles of choicest fruit appeared at intervals; while, scented from afar like the aromatic groves of Lebanon, appeared antique-shaped urns, steaming with the rich produce of the vines of Crete, Cyprus, or Syracuse. In passing, we may remark, that the wines were then, for the most part, drunk heated and sophisticate — an Italian custom introduced into the court of France by Catherine de Medicis. Here and there might be seen the ushers and chamberlains with their fleur-de-lys-covered wands of office—butlers

with embossed flagons and salvers—troops of valets and pages—and, distributed at certain stations of the board, servitors, each with a napkin on his shoulder, and an enormous knife in hand, seemingly impatient for the signal of attack.

Amid loud fanfares of trumpets, blended with the gentler notes of the hautboy and viol, and ceremoniously preceded by Du Halde, Henri, accompanied by Esclairmonde, led the way to the banquet. The monarch, however, tarried not within the hall we have described. His orgies were held in a smaller and more retired salle-à-manger, opening from the grand festal chamber, and separated from it by an arched door-way; within which was placed a line of high gilded railing, an unequivocal evidence of exclusiveness on the part of the King, that called forth much sarcastic remark from his subjects.

To the King's private table his favourites only, and *their* favourites, were admitted. Ushers of the feast were stationed at the door with a list of the guests expected. No others

were allowed to pass. Towards this room Henri now repaired, followed by a jocund troop of dames and revellers. He was in the most buoyant spirits, and descanted with the greatest animation on all that passed. A singular change seemed to have been wrought in the demeanour of Esclairmonde. She replied to Henri's lover-like assiduities with a vivacity bordering almost upon levity, which a nicer observer might have imputed to the half-frantic flashes of distraction and despair, but from which Henri drew the most favourable augury. Her cheek was flushed, and her eye shone with unwonted lustre. Once, only, as she passed through the oval chamber of which some rumours had reached even *her* ears, she started, and a slight shiver ran through her frame. But she instantly recovered herself.

The oval chamber was a retreat fitted for a voluptuary. Heavy with perfume, the atmosphere struck upon the senses of the guests as they entered, producing a soft inebriating effect. Pages, equipped in fanciful attire, sustained torches, the odorous wax of

which shed a warm light upon the richly painted arras, charged with the glowing legends of antiquity; in which, in the guise of nymphs and goddesses of old, were represented the chief beauties who had bloomed within the atmosphere of the Louvre. In this suit of tapestry the lovely Diane de Poitiers was represented, as the goddess her namesake, disporting after the chace with her nymphs—the artist having contrived to furnish the peeping satyr with the prominent features of François I:—in that, Venus Anadyomene sparkled from the sea-foam in the shape and lineaments of La Belle Féronnière—the gallant François blowing his wreathed conch as an attendant Triton. Here, the fascinating Françoise de Foix bloomed as Egeria, Francis appearing for the third time as Numa; there, the captivating Marie Touchet, whose anagram, "*Je charme tout*," so well describes her, was given as Callirhöe; her lover, Charles IX., being drawn as the hunter Eurimedon; while in the last compartment figured our bon Henri, who was represented

strangely enough as Ulysses surrendering himself to the blandishments of Circe, the features of the enchantress bearing evident resemblance to those of his first mistress, la belle Châteauneuf. Upon the frescoed ceiling were depicted the silver fountains and dragon-watched fruit of the enchanted bowers of the Hesperides.

The supper to which Henri sat down was the triumph of his *chef*—the inimitable Berini—a cook, whose name deserves to be associated with that of Luther, Calvin, Knox, and other great reformers of the sixteenth century, the spirit of which stirring age he represents as strongly as the great Ude stamps the character of our own time. The signal revolution which took place in the science of cookery at this remarkable epoch may be clearly traced to the unwearying efforts of Berini. Comprehending the growing wants of his species, with the prescience of a true philosopher, he saw that a change must be effected—and he accomplished it. He overthrew many old and tough abuses; and if he

increased the demand for good cheer, he diminished not the supply. To him, amongst a thousand other gifts, mankind is indebted for the fricandeau—a discovery which his biographer judiciously remarks, required *une grande force de tête!* He projected sauces so savoury, that terms of alchemy were required to express their stimulative effects upon the system. These sauces, however, we regret to say, modern science has pronounced to be injurious. And, finally, he trampled down popular prejudices which still remained in favour of the fingers, and introduced the fork; for which service he deserves the thanks of all fashionable novelists whatever. The only stain attached to the memory of Berini is, that he was an instrument of Catherine de Medicis; in other words, that he occasionally mingled compounds with his sauces, which were not prescribed by the recipes of his art. For the sake of so great a professor of so great a science, we hope this is mere scandal. No wonder, with dishes so exquisite placed before him, that a great man should occasionally die

from indigestion; but surely the cook is not to be blamed for an occurrence so very natural. Rather let us look to the goblet as the origin of ill. We have mentioned that the wines were at this time generally drunk mulled and spiced—a practice which, while it presented abundant facilities for the insidious admixture of poisonous drugs, completely baffled all precautions of the drinker. Leaning, therefore, to the side of genius, we are inclined to discredit this charge against the gifted Berini, and to impute the criminality of these transactions to Catherine's cup-bearer, whose name is deservedly buried in oblivion.

The repast, we have said, was Berini's triumph. In conception—in execution, it was perfect. The eye of the gourmand Marquis de Villequier glistened as he gazed upon the dainty fare. Ronsard insinuated that with such ragouts before him it was easy to understand how Vitellius and Heliogabalus exhausted an empire; a remark which, luckily for the poet, did not reach the ears of the King. Henri, in fact, was too much engrossed

by Esclairmonde to attend to the pleasantries of his guests. So soon as his Majesty and the Demoiselle, whom he honoured with his smiles, were served, the monarch graciously expressed his pleasure that the company, whom etiquette had hitherto kept upon their feet, should be seated. The carouse now began in earnest. The guests were few in number, consisting merely of some half dozen of Henri's favourites, the Dames of Honour of Marguerite de Valois, one or two of Catherine's fairest attendants, the Abbé de Brantôme, and, as we have just hinted, the poet Ronsard. The latter, who was by no means indifferent to good cheer, as his gout testified, was transported into a seventh heaven of delight with a ragout of ortolans with which the considerate Abbé had loaded his plate. Villequier had fallen to with equal industry and zeal. Henri continued unremitting in his attentions to Esclairmonde, who, though she could not be prevailed upon by all his importunities to partake of the banquet, maintained an exterior of perfect calmness and composure.

He, who had looked deeper, would perchance have perceived, that beneath that mask of smiles was hidden acute suffering, if not a breaking heart. The Demoiselle was, however, an object of envy to the other dames of the party, who attributed her indifference to the Monarch's gallant regard to mere coquetry.

"By my faith, monsieur le Vicomte," said the gay Torigni to Joyeuse, who was placed on her right hand, "the Demoiselle Esclairmonde is a finished coquette. Her coyness is the most naturally assumed I ever beheld in the most practised of our sex. Where she can have acquired such arts I cannot imagine. Some people are born with a genius for their vocation—and conquest is hers I suppose. She would have the King believe she has a perfect horror of his freedoms. I need not tell you that I have had some experience in the art of entanglement, and I declare upon my reputation, I could not have played the part better myself."

"I am quite sure of it," replied Joyeuse,

"because I think his Majesty's attentions are not so perfectly to her taste as they might be to yours. Her thoughts, I suspect, are wandering upon Crichton."

"Poh!" rejoined La Torigni, "no such thing. She is not such a simpleton. Why should her love for Crichton prevent her bestowing an occasional smile elsewhere? He is not a mirror of constancy whatever he may be of chivalry; nor wholly insensible, as you know, to the supreme attractions of our royal mistress. The thing is quite natural."

"Your reasoning is perfectly convincing, Demoiselle."

"The Chevalier Crichton is very well in his way—but a king, you know—"

"Is irresistible. You have found it so, Demoiselle."

"You are impertinent, monsieur le Vicomte."

"A la bonne heure. You have prodigiously fine eyes, Demoiselle. Italy boasts the darkest eyes in the world. Florence the darkest eyes of Italy, and the lovely Torigni the

darkest eyes of Florence. I pledge them in a bumper of Cyprus."

"Your France is a nation of courtiers," rejoined La Torigni, laughing, "and the Vicomte de Joyeuse the most finished courtier in France. I return your pledge, monseigneur. After all," continued the lively Florentine, in a tone half jest, half earnest, "I should not object to be in Esclairmonde's situation."

"Indeed!" replied Chicot, who happened to overhear this latter exclamation—"stranger things have come to pass."

At this moment Marguerite de Valois entered the room. Some slight ceremony was observed at her appearance, but the fair Queen took her place at Henri's left hand without attracting his notice.

"Your Majesty suffers from some sudden indisposition," observed Brantôme, in a tone of sympathy, remarking the haggard looks of the Queen.

"No—no," returned Marguerite, "I am well, my Lord Abbé—perfectly well."

"I may not discredit your assertion,

Madame," returned Brantôme ; "but pardon me if I venture to assert that your looks agree not with your words."

"Will your Highness allow me to recommend this coulis à la Cardinal to your attention," said Villequier. "Ronsard pronounces it thoroughly Catholic, and I were an heretic to doubt him. Suffer me, Madame—"

Marguerite declined the tempting offer of the Marquis, and suffered her eyes to stray over the company. Crichton was not amongst the number.

"Thank Heaven, he is not here!" exclaimed the Queen, giving involuntary utterance to her thoughts, and sighing deeply as if some heavy oppression had been removed from her bosom.

"Who is not here?" asked Henri, turning quickly round at the exclamation.

Chicot stepped suddenly forward.

"Methinks," said he, familiarly placing his hand upon the King's shoulder—"methinks, notre oncle, you are in need of some excitement. You lack somewhat to give a fillip

to your spirits—a spice to your wine—what can we direct you to ?—Shall it be a song ?—I have a rare charivari on a Madame the Duchess D'Usez's third espousals — a Pantagruelian legend on Pope Joan's confinement before the conclave—or a ditty on the devil's exploit at Pope Feagueland—at your service. Or if you like not this, shall I smack the rosy lips of all the coyest dames at table, beginning with the Demoiselle Torigni, and afterwards cut a lavolta on the board itself to the blithe accompaniment of ringing glass ? Or, if a gayer mood possess you, will it please you to command Maître Samson, to bring forth that quaint drinking cup, the merry devices and playful grotesques whereof are wont to excite so much amusement and such mirthful exclamations from our dames of honour,—and which cup, moreover, is so much to the fancy of our grave and discreet gossip, Pierre de Bourdeille ? " *

* It would appear so from the account given of a certain '*fort belle couppe d'argent doré*' in the '*Dames Galantes*,' to which we do *not* refer the reader.

"Cousin of Brantôme," said Henri, smiling, "our Jester libels you."

"Nay," replied Brantôme laughing, "I care not to own that the goblet of which the knave speaks has afforded me amusement, though I must, on the score of propriety, venture to oppose its introduction upon the present occasion."

"Propriety!" echoed Chicot, derisively—"Propriety sounds well in the lips of the Abbé de Brantôme—ha—ha—which of the three shall it be, gossip—the song—the kiss—or the cup?"

"A song," returned Henri, "and see that thy strains lack not spice, gossip—or look for no hippocras from the hands of Samson as thy meed."

"My strains shall smack of pimento, itself," returned Chicot. And, assuming the air of an improvisatore, he delivered himself as follows:—

All-spice, or a Spice of All.

The people endure all,
The men-at-arms cure all,
The favourites sway all,
Their reverences flay all,
The citizens pay all,
Our good King affirms all,
The Senate confirms all,
The Chancellor seals all,
Queen Catherine conceals all,
Queen Louise instructs all,
Queen Margot conducts all,
The Leaguers contrive all,
The Jacobins shrive all,
The Lutherans doubt all,
The Zuinglians scout all,
The Jesuits flout all,
The Sorbonnists rout all,
Brother Henri believes all,*
Pierre de Gondy receives all,†

* In 1574, Henri attended a procession of the Battus at Avignon, and elected himself of the brotherhood.

† Bishop of Paris.

Ruggieri defiles all,
Mad Siblot reviles all,
The bilboquets please all,
The sarbacanes tease all,
The Duc de Guise tries all,
Rare Crichton outvies all,
Abbé Brantôme retails all,
Bussy D'Amboise assails all,
Old Ronsard recants all,
Young Jodelle enchants all,
Fat Villequier crams all,
His Holiness damns all,
Esclairmonde bright outshines all,
And wisely declines all,
La Rebours will bless all,
La Fosseuse confess all,
La Guyol will fly all,
Torigni deny all,
John Calvin misguide all,
Wise Chicot deride all,
Spanish Philip * may crave all,
The Béarnais † brave all,
THE DEVIL WILL HAVE ALL!

"Gramercy," said Henri, as Chicot came

* Philip II.
† Henri of Navarre, afterwards Henri IV.

to a pause—more, it would appear, from want of breath than from lack of material for the continuance of his strains—"thou hast fairly earned thy hippocras, were it only for the justice rendered to the lovely Esclairmonde, who, as thou truly sayest, outshines all. By our Lady, messeigneurs, we must not neglect the service of Bacchus for that of Apollo. Samson, thy choicest Cyprus—a health!"

Every glass was raised—every eye bent upon the King,

"To her," continued Henri, draining his goblet, "who in her own person combines all the perfections of her sex—la belle Esclairmonde!"

"La belle Esclairmonde!" echoed each guest, enthusiastically clashing his glass against that of his neighbour.

Amidst the confusion incident to this ceremony, Crichton entered the room. For an instant his gaze rested upon that of the Demoiselle; and, momentary as was that glance, a

world of sad and passionate emotion was conveyed to the hearts of both. He then took the seat which had been reserved for him, by the side of Marguerite de Valois. Conversation in the meantime proceeded.

"I would fain enquire from your Majesty," said Brantôme, in a tone which showed that the Cyprus he had quaffed had not been without its effect upon his brain, "what are the precise notions which you entertain respecting beauty? For with a due appreciation of diaphonous orbs and hyacinthine tresses, I cannot entirely"—and here the Abbé cast a look, inebriate as that of Septimius on Acme, upon Marguerite de Valois—"I cannot, I say, admit their supremacy over eyes black as night, and locks dark as the raven's wing. Both styles have merit, no doubt: but surely your Majesty cannot be aware of the 'thirty requisites,' or you would never have assigned the palm of perfect beauty to a blonde."

"Thou art a heretic, cousin," replied Henri, laughing; "but I plead ignorance

as to thy 'thirty requisites.' Let us hear them —I shall then see how far my own opinions correspond with thine."

"I had them from a fair doña of Toledo," replied Brantôme, "a city where there are many gracious dames; and though I have never, except in one instance," added he, again glancing at Marguerite—"met with a combination of such excellencies, yet I may fairly enough assert that I have encountered them all in detail."

"Thy requisites, cousin!" said Henri, impatiently.

"Your Majesty will excuse my rhymes," replied the Abbé, with becoming modesty. "I am no poet, like my friend Ronsard. Thus then run—

The Thirty Requisites.*

THIRTY points of perfection each judge understands,
The standard of feminine beauty demands.
Three white:—and, without further prelude, we know
That the skin, hands, and teeth should be pearly as snow,

* These verses are imitated from a *trentaine* of *beaux Sis*, recorded in the *Dames Galantes*. Brantôme gives them in

Three black :—and our standard departure forbids
From dark eyes, darksome tresses, and darkly-fringed lids.
Three red :—and the lover of comeliness seeks
For the hue of the rose in the lips, nails, and cheeks.
Three long :—and of this you, no doubt, are aware?
Long the body should be, long the hands, long the hair.
Three short :—and herein nicest beauty appears—
Feet short as a fairy's, short teeth, and short ears.
Three large :—and remember this rule, as to size,
Embraces the shoulders, the forehead, the eyes.
Three narrow :—a maxim to every man's taste—
Circumference small in mouth, ancle, and waist.
Three round :—and in this I see infinite charms—
Rounded fulness apparent in leg, hip, and arms.
Three fine :—and can aught the enchantment eclipse,
Of fine tapering fingers, fine tresses, fine lips?
Three small :—and my thirty essentials are told—
Small head, nose, and bosom compact in its mould.
Now the dame who comprises attractions like these,
Will need not the cestus of Venus to please :
While he who has met with an union so rare,
Has had better luck than has fall'n to *my* share.

Brantôme's song was exceedingly well received, inasmuch as it enabled the gallants to

Spanish prose from the lips of a fair Toledan, as mentioned in the text; they are, however, to be met with in an old French work anterior to our chronicler, entitled *De la Louange et Beauté des Dames*. The same maxims have been turned into Latin hexameters by François Corniger (an ominous name for a writer on such a subject), and into Italian verse by Vincentio Calmeta.

offer various compliments, direct and indirect, to the fascinations of their fair companions. Neither did Henri fail to take advantage of the plea it afforded him, of scrutinizing with libertine gaze the charms of Esclairmonde, as the individual features of beauty passed in array before the Abbé.

Crichton looked sternly on. His blood boiled within his veins, and we know not to what extremities his indignation might have carried him, had not Esclairmonde's imploring looks restrained him.

Amidst the laughter and acclamations of the guests, Marguerite's voice sounded hollowly in his ear.

"I have watched your glances, Crichton. In your kindling eyes I read your thoughts. Your minion is wholly in Henri's power. You *cannot* deliver her."

"By Saint Andrew, I know not that!" exclaimed Crichton, fiercely.

"Your word binds you," said the Queen, smiling bitterly.

"True—true," returned Crichton, relapsing into his former gloom.

"Renounce her—and I save her," continued Marguerite..

"By what means?" demanded Crichton, incredulously.

"No matter—I will do it!—I will do more. Have I your oath?"

At this moment a low sigh reached his ears. The sound was the same as that which had warned him of the peril he had incurred when he rashly pledged his vow to Henri. Raising his eyes, he perceived the gaze of Esclairmonde fixed upon him. Her look could not be mistaken.

"Swear!" said Marguerite, sternly, who had witnessed, and could easily interpret the glance of intelligence which had passed between the lovers. "Swear!" continued she, renewing her former adjuration.

"Never," replied Crichton.

Further speech was interrupted by a wild scream of laughter proceeding from Chicot,

who, regardless of the confusion he created, or the risk which the costly vessels on the board might incur from his antics, suddenly whirled himself into the very centre of the table, taking up a position on the cover of a vase supported on three feet, upon the knob of which he described various rapid circles with the dexterity and ease of the most practised posture-master. No sooner was this feat accomplished, amidst the laughter and astonishment of the guests, than bounding — without injury to the economy of the banquet—over enamelled dish and plate, with a velocity that left little time for consideration, he brushed with his shaggy beard the fair cheeks of every dame he passed, not excepting even Marguerite de Valois, and only paused when he arrived at last before Esclairmonde. He then chuckled and nodded at Henri, as if consulting his inclinations as to whether the Demoiselle should be submitted to the same disgusting ordeal as the others, but receiving no signs of encouragement from

the monarch, he retreated to his vase, where, like a priestess of Apollo upon her tripod, after a brief prelude of gyrations, with a rapidity of utterance almost as bewildering as his antic mazes, and an infinitude of grotesque gesticulations, he burst into the following amphigouri :—

The Temptation of St. Anthony.

I.

SAINT-ANTHONY weary
Of hermit cell dreary,
Of penance, and praying,
Of orison saying,
Of mortification,
And fleshly vexation,
By good sprites forsaken,
By sin overtaken,
On flinty couch lying,
On death, like Job, crying,
Was suddenly shrouded
By thick mists, that clouded
All objects with vapour,
And through them, like taper,
A single star shimmered,
And with blue flame glimmered.

II.

What spell then was muttered
May never be uttered;
Saint Anthony prayed not—
Saint Anthony stayed not—
But down—down descending,
Through caverns unending,
Whose labyrinths travel
May never unravel,
By thundering torrent,
By toppling crag horrent,
All perils unheeding,
As levin swift speeding,
Habakkuk out-vying
On seraph-wing flying,
Was borne, on fiend's pinion,
To Hell's dark dominion.

III.

Oh! rare is the revelry
Of Tartarus' devilry!
Above him—around him—
On all sides surround him
With wildest grimaces,
Fantastical faces!
Here huge bats are twittering,
Strange winged mice flittering,
Great horned owls hooting,
Pale hissing stars shooting,

Red fire-drakes careering
With harpies are fleering.
Shapes whizzing and whirling,
Weird Sabbath-dance twirling,
Round bearded goat scowling,
Their wild refrain howling—
"Alegremonos Alegremos
Quegente nue ba tenemos.*"

IV.

Here Lemures, Lares,
Trolls, foliots, fairies,
Nymph, gnome, salamander,
In frolic groups wander.
Fearful shapes there are rising,
Of aspect surprising,
Phantasmata Stygia,
Spectra, prodigia!
Where caldrons are seething,
Lithe serpents are wreathing,
And wizards are gloating
On pois'nous scum floating,
While scull and bone placed out
In circle are traced out.

* According to Delancre, the usual *refrain* of the Sorcerers' Sabbath-song. See his "Description of the Inconstancy of Evil Angels and Demons." "Delancre's description of the Witches' Sabbath," observes the amusing anthor of *Monsieur Oufle*, "is so very ample and particular, that I don't believe I should be better informed concerning it if I had been there myself."

Here witches, air-gliding,
On broomsticks are riding
A hag a fawn chases,
A nun Pan embraces;
With loathly caresses,
A corpse a monk presses.
Here mimic fights waging,
Hell's warriors are raging;
Each legion commanding
A chief is seen standing.
Beëlzebub gleaming,
Like Gentile god seeming—
Proud Belial advancing,
With awful ire glancing;
Asmodeus the cunning,
Abaddon, light-shunning,
Dark Moloch deceiving,
His subtle webs weaving;
Meressin air-dwelling,
Red Mammon gold telling.

V.

The Fiend, then, dissembling,
Addressed the saint trembling:
"These are thine if down bowing,
Unto me thy soul vowing,
Thy worship thou'lt offer."

"Back, Tempter, thy proffer
With scorn is rejected."
"Unto me thou'rt subjected,

For thy doubts, by the Eternal!"
Laughed the Spirit Infernal.

At his word then compelling,
Forth rushed from her dwelling
A shape so inviting,
Enticing, delighting,
With lips of such witchery,
Tongue of such treachery,
(That sin-luring smile is
The torment of Lilis,)
Like Eve in her Eden,
Our Father misleading.
With locks so wide-flowing,
Limbs so bright-glowing,
That Hell hath bewrayed him,
If Heaven do not aid him.

"Her charms are surrendered
If worship is rendered."

"Sathan, get thee behind me!
My sins no more blind me—
By Jesu's temptation!
By lost man's salvation!
Be this vision banished!"

And straight Hell evanished.

And suiting the action to the phrase, at the conclusion of his song, Chicot threw himself

head over heels from the table, and vanished likewise. Acclamations were heard on all sides. Whatever the festive assemblage might think of the Jester's song, they were infinitely amused by his summersault. By this time, too, the generous wines, with which each goblet was constantly replenished, had begun to do their duty. Every eye grew bright—every tongue loud—and a greater degree of licence reigned throughout. Crichton alone partook not of the festivities.

"Par la Mort-Dieu, mon brave Ecossois," said Henri, with a smile of exultation, "you are not in your usual spirits to night. You have not a smile for a fair dame—you do but indifferent justice to Berini's supper, (and Villequier, or your brother bard, Ronsard, will tell you it has merit)—and you wholly neglect Samson's goblets, though this Syracuse hath potency enough to turn the blood to flame. Try it, I pray of you.—Your thoughtful visage assorts ill with

our sprightly associates. Let your spirits sparkle like our wine—like the eyes around us—and drown your despondency in the flowing bowl."

"An excellent proposal, Sire," said D'Épernon—"Crichton is either in love or jealous—perhaps both—he eats not, talks not, drinks not, signs infallible."

"Pshaw," replied Joyeuse—"he has lost a favourite hawk, or a horse, or a thousand pistoles at play—or—"

"He thinks of his duel with the Mask," added Saint Luc—"he has confessed and received the Holy Communion, and the priest has enjoined a night of fasting and repentance."

"He has lost a supper, then, which, like Brantôme's beauty, has every requisite," said Villequier, with his mouth full of marchpane—"I pity him."

"Or his appetite," said Ronsard, "without which even a supper at the Louvre would be thrown away."

"Or a rhyme," said Torigni; "a loss to make a bard look sad—eh, Monsieur de Ronsard?"

"Or a sarbacane," said Chicot.

"Or a toy of less moment than either," hiccupped Brantôme—"a mistress."

Here a loud laugh was raised.

"A truce to raillery," said Henri, joining in the laugh. "Crichton is a little out of sorts—fatigued, naturally enough, with his disputation of the morning, and his exertions in the ball-room—however, we trust he has not entirely lost his voice, but that he will favour us with one of those exquisite chansons-à-boire, with which, of old, he was wont to enliven our wassailry."

"A song!—a song!" echoed all the symposiacs, laughing louder than ever.

"My strains will scarcely harmonize with your revel, Sire," returned Crichton, gloomily—"my livelier thoughts desert me."

"No matter," replied Henri, "be they sad as those of Erebus—'twill give a sharper edge to our festivity."

In a voice then which, as he proceeded, gradually hushed all disposition to mirth, Crichton sang :—

The Three Orgies.

I.

In banquet hall, beside the King,
Sat proud Thyestes revelling.
The festal board was covered fair,
The festal meats were rich and rare;
Thyestes ate full daintily,
Thyestes laughed full lustily;
But soon his haughty visage fell—
A dish was brought—and, wo to tell!
A gory head that charger bore!
An infant's look the features wore!
Thyestes shrieked—King Atreus smiled—
The Father had devoured his child!

Fill the goblet! fill it high!
To Thyestes' revelry.
Of blood-red wines the brightest choose,
The glorious grape of Syracuse!

II.

For a victory obtained
O'er the savage Getæ chained,
In his grand Cæsarean hall
Domitian holds high festival.

To a solemn feast besought
Thither are the Senate brought.
As he joins the stately crowd,
Smiles each grave Patrician proud.
One by one each guest is led
Where Domitian's feast is spread;
Each, recoiling, stares aghast
At the ominous repast:—
Round abacus of blackest shade
Black triclinia are laid,
Sable vases deck the board
With dark-coloured viands stored;
Shaped like tombs, on either hand,
Rows of dusky pillars stand;
O'er each pillar in a line,
Pale sepulchral lychni shine;
Cinerary urns are seen,
Carved each with a name, I ween,
By the sickly radiance shown
Every guest may read his own!
Forth then issue swarthy slaves,
Each a torch and dagger waves;
Some, like Manes habited,
Figures ghastly as the dead!
Some, as Lemures attired,
Larvæ some, with vengeance fired.
See! the throat of every guest
By a murderous gripe is prest!
While the wretch, with horror dumb,
Thinks his latest hour is come!

Loud then laugh'd Domitian,
Thus his solemn feast began.

Fill the goblet! fill it high!
To Domitian's revelry.
Let our glowing goblet be
Crown'd with wine of Sicily!

III.

Borgia * holds a papal fête,
And Zizime, with heart elate,
With his chiefs Barbarian
Seeks the gorgeous Vatican.
'Tis a wondrous sight to see
In Christian hall that company!
But the Othman warriors soon
Scout the precepts of Mahoun.
Wines of Sicily and Spain,
Joyously those Paynims drain;
While Borgia's words their laughter stir,
"*Bibimus Papaliter!*"
At a signal—pages three,
With gold goblets, bend the knee:

* Alexander VI., of the family of Lenzuoli, who assumed, previous to his Pontificate, the name of Borgia, a name rendered infamous, as well by his own crimes and vices, as by those of his monster offspring, Cæsar and Lucrezia. This Pope, according to Gordon, was instigated to the murder of Zizime or Djem, son of Mahomet II., by a reward of 300,000 ducats, promised by Bajazet, brother to the ill-fated Othman Prince.

Borgia pours the purple stream,
Beads upon its surface gleam,
"Do us reason, noble guest,"
Thus Zizime, the Pontiff prest:
"By our triple-crown there lies,
In that wine-cup Paradise!"
High Zizime the goblet raised—
Loud Zizime the Cyprus praised—
To each guest in order slow,
Next the felon pages go.
Each in turn the Cyprus quaffs,
Like Zizime, each wildly laughs,—
Laughter horrible and strange!
Quick ensues, a fearful change,
Stifled soon is every cry,
Azrael is standing by.
Glared Zizime—but spake no more:
Borgia's fatal feast was o'er!

Fill the goblet! fill it high!
With the wines of Italy;
Borgia's words our laughter stir—
Bibimus Papaliter!

"*Bibamus Regaliter!*" exclaimed Henri, as Crichton's song concluded. "Dieu Merci! we have no dread of such a consummation at our orgies. A reveller might well stand in awe of the bowl, if after his nocturnal banquet he should awaken in Elysium. You must now, perforce, pledge us, mon Ecossois,

or we shall think you hold our feasts in the same horror as those of Borgia—a cup of Cyprus—you will not refuse us?"

"He will not refuse *me*," said Marguerite de Valois. "Give me a goblet, Loisel."

A page approached with a flagon of gold.

"Fill for me," said the Queen.

And the wine was poured out.

"To our re-union whispered she," drinking.

"I pledge you, Madame," answered Crichton, raising the goblet.

Marguerite's eyes were fixed upon him. All trace of colour had deserted her cheeks.

"How is this?" exclaimed Crichton, laying down the goblet untasted. "Poison!—Do Borgia's drugs find entrance here?"

"Poison!" echoed all, rising in astonishment and dismay.

"Ay—poison!" reiterated Crichton. "See the ruddy bezoar in this ring has become pale as opal. This wine is poisoned."

"*I* have drunk of it," said Marguerite, with a withering look. "Your own faint heart misgives you."

"Some poisons have their antidotes, Madame," observed Crichton, sternly. "The knife of Parysades was anointed on one side only."

"Bring Venetian glass," cried Henri, "that will remove or confirm your suspicions. Sangdieu! Chevalier Crichton, if this interruption be groundless, you shall bitterly repent it."

"Give me the Venice glass," said Crichton, "I will abide the issue."

A glass was brought, bell-shaped—light—clear as crystal. Crichton took it and poured within it the contents of his own goblet.

For a second no change was observed. The wine then suddenly hissed and foamed. The glass shivered into a thousand pieces.

All eyes were now turned on the Queen of Navarre. She had fainted.

"Let her be cared for," said Henri, affecting indifference, "Miron must attend her—he will understand—" and the King whispered a few words to Du Halde. "Fair

dames, and you messeigneurs," added he to the guests, who looked on aghast, "this incident must not interrupt our revel. Samson, we appoint thee our taster—wine! wine!"

END OF VOL. I.

Ainsworth, William Harrison
Crichton 2d. ed.